Commentary

VOLUME NINETY-TWO • NUMBER THREE • SEPTEMBER 1991

What to Do About the Soviet Collapse

Vladimir Bukovsky

E Pluribus Nihil

Midge Decter

A Woman for All Seasons

Leon R. Kass

Saving Europe from Itself

Giuseppe Sacco

Soldier, Salesman, Swindler, Spy

André A. Aciman

Killer Bimbos

Richard Grenier

Books in Review:

Ruth R. Wisse/Martin Kramer/Arch Puddington/
Terry Eastland/Charlotte Allen

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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

The Gulf War and . . .

1. The Vietnam Paradigm

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I beg to differ with Joshua Muravchik ["The End of the Vietnam Paradigm?," May]. The Gulf War was not a war to end the Vietnam syndrome and obviously not a war to make the Middle East safe for democracy. And it certainly was not a war to punish the aggressor who, as of this writing, is still very much in power. Rather, the Gulf War was simply the finest demonstration to date of Arabist control over Middle East policy since American flags were placed on Kuwaiti vessels in the tilt toward Saddam Hussein against Iran. And in getting us to support Desert Storm, the Arabist camp outdid itself. . . .

It was not until after the Gulf War ended that we heard Secretary of State Baker talk about "windows of opportunity," but the opportunity he had in mind was the one offered by an Israel reduced to protectorate status by the execution of Arabist policy in the White House. When the Arabists saw that they could succeed in stripping Israel of its capacity for self-defense, they indeed saw a "window of opportunity"—an opportunity to ram a settlement down Israeli throats.

The outcry against abandoning the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq to a resurgent Saddam Hussein has demonstrated that the American people are rather kinder and gentler than their President. The President, let us recall, at first turned his back on the Kurds and Shiites who had rebelled at his urging. But American public opinion forced Bush to step in and protect these people from the man he had once called a brutal dictator.

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
Bronx, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Joshua Muravchik makes the case for a more realistic appraisal of the value of expert opinion and expert advice in political affairs. It seems that one can apply to policy experts the same thing Harry Truman once said about economics experts: if you laid them end to end, they would all point in different directions.

Most Democrats were wrong on the Gulf War. But can one really say that the Republicans were right? Successful as Desert Storm was, as far as it went, one cannot just look at the war itself, for all wars occur within a specific context. The totality of American Persian Gulf policy can best be described as inept—if not downright idiotic—based on what might be called delusions of adequacy. Senator Alan Simpson's groveling at his meeting with Saddam Hussein was exceptional only in degree and style, not in substance. It is inaccurate, not to mention unfair, to look solely at the conduct of the war itself, for the war should not have happened.

The same bungling disguised as realism seems to be repeating itself now. I was recently astonished to hear the same arguments offered for not intervening in the Iraqi civil war . . . and for maintaining Iraqi stability, that were once offered for "tilting" toward Iraq over Iran. Aside from the basic crassness of allowing Saddam Hussein to return to his murderous old policies, it seems that every time this country chooses seeming practicality over morality we get into deep trouble. Batista, Duvalier, Marcos, Somoza, the Shah of Iran—the list of American policy mistakes, of dumbpolitik masquerading as realpolitik, is long and dismal.

Mr. Muravchik's implied theme—that the Democrats have still not demonstrated that they have earned the right to implement foreign-policy alternatives, and hence the right to the White House—is correct. However, the overall record of Republican foreign policy in the past ten years—with, to be honest, some notable exceptions—shows that alternatives are most definitely needed.

BRUCE BRAGER
Arlington, Virginia

JOSHUA MURAVCHIK writes:

I share David R. Zukerman's indignation over the Bush administration's abandonment of the Iraqis who rose against Saddam Hussein, but not his jaundiced construction of its motives in the Gulf War, which was fought, I believe, to prevent an ambitious aggressor from gaining dominance over a strateg-

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ically sensitive region and to uphold a basic principle of international law. I share, too, his worry about the influence of Arabists over American policy, but not his apparent belief that they are all-powerful or able to engineer Machiavellian schemes of vast complexity.

I agree entirely with Bruce Brager's denunciation of realpolitik and amoralism in foreign policy of which, as he says, Republicans tend to be at least as guilty as Democrats. In my new book, *Exporting Democracy*, I endeavor to set forth in some detail the case against such so-called "realism."

2. American Blacks

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "Black Leaders vs. Desert Storm" [May], Arch Puddington refers indirectly to the assertion that blacks contributed disproportionately to the casualty list in Vietnam. Indeed, during the Gulf War, some media pundits and politicians stated that blacks accounted for from "a quarter" to "over half" of our losses in Vietnam. However, according to U.S. Department of Defense statistics, there were 58,135 combat and noncombat deaths in Vietnam, of which blacks made up 7,261 or 12.48 percent. According to the *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1990*, blacks made up 11.1 percent of the total U.S. population in 1970. The black population tends to be younger than average. Thus blacks made up 11.3 percent of the military-age groups of 19-to-24 in 1970. . . . All other things being equal, blacks should have accounted for 6,571 instead of 7,261 deaths. So by this calculation there were 690 excess black deaths in Vietnam.

The death of one human being is of course a tragedy, especially if it could have been prevented. . . . Nevertheless, the claim that blacks died in Vietnam far out of proportion to their numbers in the population is unfounded.

Mr. Puddington points out that blacks now make up about 15 percent of the military-age population and accounted for 15 percent of the combat deaths in the Gulf. The small disparity of Vietnam has disappeared entirely. African-Americans have made outstanding contributions in all of our wars since the Revolution. Attempts to inflate their contribution to the casualty list are thus unnecessary and almost insulting. If the rest of American society offered minorities as much opportunity to share benefits and burdens as does the military, we would all be better off.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Arch Puddington's article is informative and powerful. Antiwar sentiment at the outset of the war was cloaked in (of all things) mathematical logic: (a) young adult whites outnumber young adult blacks by a ratio of 5.66-to-1; (b) the ratio among armed-forces personnel is 5-to-1; *ergo* (c) war is a racist institution. I fail to see the relevance of these numbers to Kuwait. For if we were to examine America on the basis of disease rates, automobile ownership, dance-club affiliation, shoe size, ingestion of Big Macs, support for specific baseball teams, or any other category we could come up with, we would find, I suspect, that the ratio of whites to blacks would never be precisely 5.66-to-1. . . .

Blacks are overrepresented in the Army just as they are overrepresented among basketball players. Both professions are purely voluntary and offer high pay, job advancement, travel, adventure, security, peer support. . . . Was professional basketball invented by white Republicans for the repression of blacks?

I suspect that few of the black soldiers who wound up in Kuwait were dragged kicking and screaming to their Army enlistment stations. Anybody who joins the Army must surely realize one somber fact: armies exist to fight wars. This has been true for 5,000 years, but came to the attention of certain intellectuals only in 1991! . . .

STEPHEN A. BERGER
Tel Aviv, Israel

ARCH PUDDINGTON writes:

I appreciate David C. Stolinsky's precise figures on the racial composition of Vietnam war deaths. There would not, of course, have been a furor over black "overrepresentation" within the military had the United States decided to retain the draft. Even with its inequities, the draft gave the U.S. a military that reasonably reflected the racial and social mix of its people, and was much more in keeping with the country's democratic traditions than the current all-volunteer institution. That blacks comprise a disproportionate percentage of the

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volunteer armed forces is precisely why the volunteer service has enjoyed such high levels of support among black political leaders. My personal view is that the heavy presence within the military of members of a particular minority group, especially one with a high percentage of poverty, is a legitimate issue for public concern and debate. But it is patently illogical, not to say dishonest, for black leaders to defend the volunteer concept tenaciously during times of peace because it offers opportunities to blacks, and then, when war looms, insist that the system is unfair because blacks might suffer heavy casualties.

Stephen A. Berger touches on an important issue when he points to the various motivations for military enlistment. Military service has always held an appeal for young men, particularly those who approach adulthood with an uncertain future. They join for any number of reasons: patriotism, the prospect of adventure, a desire to fly airplanes or pilot ships, a few years of security, and, more recently, expanded access to higher education. Although many might find the fact too galling to acknowledge, some young men seek out military service because fighting the enemies of America seems a thoroughly honorable mission.

I might add that while we might disagree with the black critics of Desert Storm, we cannot ignore the racial divisions exposed during the debate over the war's justifications. True, black popular support for the war stood at relatively high levels at Desert Storm's victorious conclusion. But during the debate which preceded hostilities, and in the war's early weeks, polls showed a consistently high differential—at times reaching 40 percent—between white and black attitudes toward President Bush's policies. These are disturbing figures, the more so given the enthusiasm with which some black leaders promoted the idea of open resistance to the war.

3. The Press

To the Editor of Commentary:

Thank you for John Corry's "TV News & the Neutrality Principle" [May]. I would like to add the observation that, in spite of their own intentions, the media helped promote support for America's efforts. According to those who provide statistics on these matters, more Americans read about, listened to, or watched reports on the Gulf crisis than on any other national event in recent history. What the media hoped to present were images of a distraught nation virtually at war with itself, generally opposed to military intervention, governed by self-serving dopes, and poorly defended by an army that attracted only dropouts and losers. Instead, ironically enough, what we saw bolstered our patriotism and self-esteem as a nation.

To begin with, as soon as our all-volunteer army began to ship out, there were daily images of articulate, proud, disciplined soldiers who understood their mission and were ready and anxious to do the job. Furthermore, the loved ones left behind were resolute rather than resentful, much to the disappointment of reporters who continued to ask leading questions about dying for oil, etc.

Second, the congressional debate was a graphic example of democracy in action. Although many speeches were egregious examples of hand-wringing and preening, most legislators were sober and articulate, and some were brilliant and eloquent. Most important was the affirmation that our democracy is worth defending and even dying for.

Third, and perhaps best, during the press briefings at the Pentagon and in Saudi Arabia, Americans were able to see first-hand how downright stupid most of the questions were. The live briefings were, in fact, much funnier than subsequent satires, and reporters generally came off as inane.

Thus, in spite of their intentions, the media presented unforgettable vignettes of what is best in America, and for that they merit some recognition.

Ruth S. King

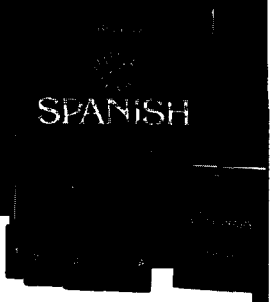
New York City

To the Editor of Commentary:

John Corry's article was admirable, but he left out one salient point.

During the Gulf War there were a lot of ambitious journalists who felt they had to get away from their military minders and go out after some "story" or other. One of

"They couldn't believe an American actually spoke their language."



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these, Robert Fisk of the London *Independent*, made it his business to scrape every barrel in sight for any item, however trivial, that would make allied, and especially American, troops look bad. The ordeal of the captured CBS crew was a direct result of such careerist stupidity.

I never felt sorry for those CBS people, for this reason: such journalists may well be in possession of information which can be tactically damaging to the side they come from. If they reveal that information to the other side, it can get our people killed. A favorite refrain of "neutral" journalists like Fisk was that such a thing would not happen. But what if journalists are captured, like the CBS crew, and then tortured for what they know? Could, or can, they guarantee to reveal nothing, given the psychological conditioning of their "neutrality"? . . .

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

John Corry's unwillingness to allow nonsense to pass unremarked has been badly missed since he left the New York *Times*. . . . He is the most consistently interesting and refreshingly unpredictable person writing on TV "journalism" today.

STANLEY E. HONIG
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

4. Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading David Bar-Illan's "Israel After the Gulf War" [May], I thought back to a daytime talk show I watched during the war whose guests were opposed to military action against Iraq.

One of the guests . . . described herself as Jewish and a journalist. At the beginning she professed great distress at the Scud attacks on Israel, but her concern could not have been more than skin deep, for throughout the rest of the program, whenever she mentioned Israel, her tongue dripped poison. She sounded like a member of the PLO.

For years now most reporters have taken a pro-Arab and anti-Israel line. This ensures that they have entrée to Arab states and can interview the likes of Yasir Arafat, Saddam Hussein, Muammar Qaddafi, etc.

Last but not least, they feel safe. They know that no matter how biased and unfair, and often vicious, what they say or print about Israel, the Israelis will not murder them or kidnap them and hold them hostage. But Western hostages have been held for years by Arabs in conditions worse than animals in a zoo; people have been murdered merely for saying things the extremist Arabs did not like.

The woman I referred to above was not satisfied that for years the UN has been a virtual lynch mob where Israel is concerned, but demanded that it take the same action against Israel that it had taken against Iraq. I believe that the UN had never said one word of criticism of any Arab atrocity until Iraq invaded and conquered Kuwait. . . .

With the exception of child molesters, I don't think there is anything more despicable than people who seek to curry favor with anti-Semites by attacking and defaming Israel.

The fact that there are also Jews, even in Israel, who do this is far more serious than when such things are uttered by the KKK or others. The "blame-America-first crowd" is more an annoyance than a danger to a country as large and powerful as the U.S. However, for a country as small and vulnerable as Israel, surrounded by states dedicated to its destruction, such behavior is extremely dangerous. The statements such people make against Israel are then used by people who would like to see Israel cease to exist. . . .

I am not Jewish, but like many other non-Jewish Americans, I am a firm supporter of Israel. My grandparents were born in Czechoslovakia, and I have watched with dismay and anger as Israel is constantly being pressured to submit to a Middle Eastern Munich.

HELEN L. BLAHA
Sacramento, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan is to be commended for his penetrating analysis of the new realpolitik in the Middle East in the May issue as well as for his vigorous advocacy of truthful reporting on Israel ["*60 Minutes* & the Temple Mount," February]. Israel sorely needs persuasive and committed spokes-

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men such as Mr. Bar-Illan to counter the constant barrage of unfavorable and often misinformed reporting and analysis the public is being exposed to.

As an Israeli I strongly believe, however, that many Israeli spokesmen, and even on occasion Mr. Bar-Illan himself, are making a regrettable mistake when they defend Israel's remaining in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza exclusively on security grounds while neglecting to stress what is increasingly being recognized as the central issue in the Middle East: the inherent and inalienable right of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland.

In his article, for example, Mr. Bar-Illan states that Israel cannot consider territorial concessions because this ". . . might compromise its strategic position," or because of its ". . . fear of unpredictable Arab violence and aggression. . . ." These points are, of course, true and they have to be stated again and again. The need for security, however, does not create legitimacy, and the struggle of Israel against its neighbors and against the Palestinian movement is in essence about legitimacy.

The Palestinians know this. They never miss an opportunity to portray themselves as natives, the indigenous population, while the Jews are depicted as illegitimate outsiders: settlers, interlopers, foreigners, occupiers, colonialists, Europeans. This tactic has seriously damaged Israel's political position, since Israel's security needs . . . could be realized in many ways, while a homeland, in this case a Palestinian homeland, must remain inviolate. Why, then, *shouldn't* Israel be expected to compromise?

Now is the time to put before the world Israel's only absolute and irreducible justification: this land must remain in Israeli hands because it is *our* home, *our* land. It has been so for thousands of years, and saying so should be a source of pride rather than embarrassment. The Arabs have been getting away with the "big lie" that Palestine is their land for too long, and the result has been that even Israel's friends around the world, including the United States, and even many Zionist Jews, refuse to accept the legitimacy of its presence in parts of its land, and assume that only Palestinian claims to a homeland are legitimate. And yet Israeli officials remain silent on this issue. Would any other country refrain from arguing its natural and inherent right to hold on to those lands that had always belonged to it, even if history had denied it the opportunity to enjoy that right for centuries? Of course not. . . .

In addition, Israel's representatives continue to damage its position even when they are not directly addressing this issue, by misuses of language that imply, even if unintentionally, a certain illegitimacy to our nation-building activities. I am referring specifically to the following:

1. Israel's spokesmen should bring to a total halt the use of the term "settlement" when referring to the Jewish communities of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and they should protest its use whenever they hear it. This word has acquired a totally negative overtone of illegitimacy and even of criminality, and there is no reason that we should in any way perpetuate this impression. These Jewish communities are simply following in the footsteps of Israel's founders, who saw the liberation of the land as the primary vehicle for building our national home. The people who built these communities and the people who live in them deserve praise and admiration.

2. Russian *olim*—indeed, all *olim*—should not be referred to as "immigrants"; this only reinforces their image as outsiders. They should be called what they really are: *refugees*, who are being *repatriated* to the home of their ancestors. It is, after all, the Law of Return that grants them the right of entry and of citizenship. Do the Palestinians ever hesitate to refer to Arabs born outside of "Palestine" as Palestinian "refugees" just because they were born elsewhere? Why should we not make the same argument just as vigorously?

I cannot, of course, ignore the problem of the Palestinian Arabs and of our passionate desire not to be the rulers of another people. This is a real problem and cannot be brushed aside. Its solution will require creative diplomacy and much good will, which I sincerely believe Israel's government has displayed ever since the Camp David peace process. But this problem does not justify, and can never justify, the relinquishing of Jewish land. As Mr. Bar-Illan correctly states—"relinquishing land is permanent. . . ." No self-respecting country anywhere would willingly agree to such an irrevocable step, no matter how lofty the purpose; Israel should not be expected to do so, either, and it should say so, loudly and clearly.

BEN TZION GREENBERGER
Deputy Mayor, Maaleh Adumim
Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

David Bar-Illan's recent articles, "Israel After the Gulf War" and "*60 Minutes* & the Temple Mount," make for incisive reading. But I'm sure I'm not alone in wondering what Mr. Bar-Illan's reaction has been to the startling verdict on the Temple Mount riot that was given by Judge Ezra Kama in Israel on July 18. According to reports in the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post*, Judge Kama's findings directly contradict those of the government-appointed Zamir commission—and thus, by inference, the conclusions of Mr. Bar-Illan as well. Most important, it now appears the Jerusalem police actually *provoked* the violence at the al-Aksa mosque which resulted in the deaths of 17 Arabs. Where does this leave Mr. Bar-Illan's analysis?

MILT KOLODNY
Tulsa, Oklahoma

DAVID BAR-ILLAN writes:

Let me first thank Helen L. Blaha for her eloquent letter.

I take "the inherent and inalienable right of the Jewish people to its ancestral homeland," as Ben Tzion Greenberger aptly puts it, quite for granted. It is the reason a Jewish state in the land of Israel is a historic imperative and a grand success, while the attempt to establish one in Soviet Birobidzhan in the 1920's was a ludicrous exercise, doomed to failure. I believe that the millennia-long Jewish ties to the Judea and Samaria areas, the cradle of Jewish history, are at least as compelling as Jewish bonds with Tel Aviv and Haifa. But even most of the "peace-camp" followers do not dispute this. What they say is that in the past the people of Israel lived in this country as a sovereign nation within borders of varying sizes, and that modern Israel can decide today to live in a smaller home if it means peace and a smaller Arab minority. After all, Solomon's kingdom extended well into today's Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. But only a fringe minority believes that Israel's "inherent right to hold on to those

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lands that had always belonged to it" extends to all of Solomon's kingdom, even if in the course of a war the Israel Defense Force occupies these lands.

The Israeli consensus is that today's land of Israel is defined by the borders of the British Mandate, plus the Golan Heights and minus Trans-Jordan. But many Israelis find it difficult to feel the same undying devotion and fierce loyalty for Jericho or Gaza that they feel for Jerusalem. That is why a majority will answer positively to the question, "Will you trade any land for true, lasting peace?," and with an emphatic "no" to "Will you be willing to return to the 1967 lines for a true, lasting peace?" To show that the first question is a hoax and the second an oxymoron was one of the purposes of my article, "Israel After the Gulf War." The option of relinquishing anything less than all of Judea, Samaria, Gaza, and East Jerusalem for any kind of treaty does not exist so far, while a withdrawal to the 1967 lines and the achievement of peace are a contradiction in terms.

I cannot quarrel with Mr. Greenberger's cavil about the misuse of language. But he attacks relatively minor targets. He allows that the term "settlement" has acquired a totally negative overtone of illegitimacy. In itself the term is innocent enough. And while I prefer the rather clumsy "Jewish towns and villages," I am certain that if such usage became common, the media would find a way to make "Jewish villages" sound like colonialist outposts of fanatic fundamentalists, which is what they have succeeded in doing with "settlements."

I wish there were an English equivalent for "*olim*," but there is none. Calling them refugees is simply inaccurate. There are, after all, *olim* from the U.S. and other Western countries, and even immigrants from the Soviet Union carrying Soviet passports do not qualify as refugees.

I am much more concerned with the far more dangerous abuse of the word "Palestinian," which Mr. Greenberger does not mention. Few now realize that the Arab inhabitants of Palestine during the British Mandate resented the appellation Palestinian. They called themselves Arab, and named all their institutions—from the Arab Higher Committee on down—"Arab," not Palestinian. Only the Jews, when referring to themselves and their institutions in English, used "Palestine": the Palestine *Post*, the Palestine Symphony, the United Palestine Appeal are typical examples. Jewish artists from this country were billed as "the Palestinian pianist, painter, writer," etc. And the tens of thousands of "Palestinian soldiers" who served in the British army in World War II were virtually all Jewish. (Nor was the name synonymous with Jews only in the Middle East. Immanuel Kant referred to Jews as Palestinians in a celebrated anti-Jewish essay.)

The leading Arab historian Philip Hitti, testifying before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946, decried the use of "Palestine" even in maps, because it was associated "in the mind of the average American—and perhaps the Englishman, too—with the Jews." Applying the term to the Arabs of Palestine probably began in the early 1960's, but neither Security Council Resolution 242 of 1967 nor 338 of 1973 mentions Palestinians at all. It was only in the mid-70's that the term became popular.

Even today, the nationalism of the Palestinian Arabs is an Arab—not Palestinian—nationalism. Their slogan is "Palestine is Arab," not "Palestine is Palestinian." As the leading historian of Arab nationalism, Yehoshua Porath of the Hebrew University, points out, "The concept of Palestinian nationalism (*Koomya Falestiniya*) is a figment of Israeli and Western authors' imagination. To date not a single, solitary Arab writer has used it when writing in Arabic."

When the state of Israel was founded, journalist Sidney Zion suggested that it be called Palestine. Jews would not, of course, entertain the notion of calling the country by the name their Roman enemies gave it in order to humiliate them. But it might have helped in the propaganda war. For it is difficult today to blame those who are ignorant of the country's history—which includes the vast majority of journalists—for assuming that the people who call themselves Palestinian are the legitimate owners of a country which used to be called Palestine for almost 2,000 years. Unfortunately, the semantic problem is far too complicated to be combated with "refugees" instead of "immigrants" and "communities" instead of "settlements."

I am glad to have the opportunity to clarify the issue Milt Kolodny brings up, even though it means trying the patience of readers with an adapted version of a Jerusalem *Post* editorial which I wrote immediately following the release of the Kama report.

In fact, the discrepancies between the Kama report and the report of the Zamir commission are minor, as the Israeli press to its credit was quick to acknowledge. Kama confirms *all* the Zamir findings on the basic facts of the riot: that the mob onslaught forced the police to withdraw from the Temple Mount; that rocks were hurled at the Western Wall worshippers, who had mostly dispersed due to quick police warnings; that the police post on the Mount was torched; that 20 injured policemen needed hospital care; that 15 Jewish worshippers were injured, of whom seven required hospital treatment; and that the return of the police to the Mount was eminently justified by concern for two policemen with whom contact had been lost, by fear that the mob would loot the arms at the Temple Mount police post, and by the continued stoning of the Western Wall plaza and tourist buses.

One small point of difference is that whereas the Zamir commission believed the incitement of the mobs included agitation over the mosque's loudspeakers, Kama finds no evidence of explicit loudspeaker exhortations to "kill the Jews," but only calls to "prevent the occupation of Islam's holy places," and shouts directed at the neighboring Arab village to "come to the Mount to sacrifice soul and blood to save the land." But Kama also confirms agitation by preachers who addressed the mobs on the ground. Most important, he confirms that Muslims were urged by mosque preachers on the previous Friday, by leaflets issued by the Hamas fundamentalists, and by word of mouth to come to the Mount to defend it from the "Temple Mount Faithful." He states that "3,000 Arabs, mostly youths," heeded the call and that stones were prepared in advance—even though the Muslim leadership knew that none of the "Temple Mount Faithful" would be allowed to come anywhere near the area, and in fact clearly saw them leaving the Western Wall gates almost an hour before the rioting began.

The point the New York *Times* and Washington *Post* focused on in reporting Kama's findings, which afforded a pretext for concluding that the police "provoked" the riot,

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was Kama's description of an accident with a tear-gas grenade. Yet these are Kama's words:

> It is possible that, at a certain stage, after some of the Muslim crowds began advancing on the police, with some of them hurling stones at the police, a tear-gas grenade fell. But I have no evidence as to the deliberate tossing of the grenade toward the Muslim women and girls except for the evidence by Sheikh al-Rifai and two men who participated in the disturbance.

In his summation, Kama speculates that the tear-gas grenade might have been kicked by the police in the direction of the menacing youths or toward a nearby crowd of women. But even if the incident happened, to call the relatively harmless trail of tear-gas smoke a "provocation" for a 50-minute riot in which 45 policemen were assaulted by a mob of 3,000, and worshippers were stoned for 20 minutes, requires a special talent for distortion, if not malice.

Nor does Judge Kama doubt the propriety of police conduct at this point. With thousands advancing on them from two sides and coming within five meters, with the police pushed to the wall, many of them hurt by stones and tear-gas grenades thrown back at them, their lives were most definitely in danger. American press stories say only that the judge "found" that in this encounter at least one Arab was killed. This too is a distortion. The report says:

> Officer Rizik Anem says he fired rubber bullets from a distance of seven-eight meters and hit a man in his upper torso. The man fell and was dragged away. . . . There is no doubt some people were hurt among those who assaulted the border police. . . . There is no way to know if they were hurt by live ammunition. No evidence was brought regarding the kind of injuries suffered at this stage or whether one of the injured died. Despite all efforts to determine who was injured or killed at this stage, there is no way to reach an unequivocal conclusion that someone was actually killed.

In his summation, Kama says that Arab doctors testified that one of the casualties was severely injured and consequently died or "was dying" in the mosque (though one doctor testified that he found no injuries or blood on the victim). It is, of course, possible for a rubber bullet fired at short range to kill.

Like Zamir, finally, Kama faults the police for being ill-prepared, disorganized, and negligent. He names four men who fired when their lives were no longer in danger, although he asserts there is no way to establish that their actions caused deaths.

In short, the Kama report constitutes a striking example of what Israel expects of itself. The police are blamed for failing to foresee and prevent a tragic event caused by a raging mob, and for not being restrained enough in quelling a riot. For this failure they are made to share the blame with those in the Palestinian leadership who knowingly used a deliberate lie about "a Jewish invasion of the Temple Mount" to incite violence. It would be difficult to name a similar assumption of responsibility by any other judiciary system in the world.

The Israeli press, to repeat, including newspapers whose attitude to the Zamir commission was hostile, described the Kama report accurately as reinforcing the commission's conclusion. That the plain text of that report should be inverted and used by the New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* for another round of Israel-bashing is a sad commentary on their standards.

Germany & Iraq

To the Editor of Commentary:

As an avid Commentary reader for many years, I feel compelled to respond to the article by Michael Ledeen ["Iraq's German Connection," April], which alleges that the government of the Federal Republic of Germany played a substantial and deliberate part in helping Iraq build up its potential of weapons of mass destruction and conventional arms; charges the German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, with hypocrisy in connection with this matter; and concludes with a suggestion of "moral corruption" on the German side.

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First, let me clarify a few things so that readers of COMMENTARY may draw their own conclusions:

• It was no later than 1961 that the German government stopped authorizing weapons exports to Iraq. Similarly, the government imposed tighter requirements on the authorization of other merchandise exports to Iraq. Even before the UN embargo went into effect, deliveries of armaments and so-called "dual-use" goods to military users in Iraq had been suspended.

• The Federal Republic of Germany is, as I understand it, thus far the only country in the world to have renounced—in a form binding under international law—the production of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons. Germany is not engaged in the production or export of nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons, nor does the German government possess any such weapons.

• Germany's export-control regulations are among the most rigid in the world. As early as 1984, Germany was the first country in the world to require government authorization for the export of any equipment that might be used in the production of chemical and biological weapons. In order to tighten these rules further, the government—in another unprecedented move—enacted legislation penalizing any involvement by German citizens at home or abroad in the production of weapons of mass destruction.

At no time did the German government approve of—or even knowingly tolerate—any supplies in support of the Iraqi nuclear-, biological-, or chemcial-weapons program. As soon as evidence became available pointing toward the possible participation of German companies in the construction of an Iraqi chemical-weapons plant, duly qualified investigating authorities were brought in. While it is true that the investigations turned out to be time-consuming and indictment came rather late, this was due solely to the extraordinary difficulties that emerged when it came to furnishing proof that the equipment delivered had actually been used for the production of chemical weapons.

• It is not true that the Foreign Minister was shown German-manufactured components of Scud missiles by Israeli authorities. On the contrary, an examination of the missiles in question by Israeli technicians revealed that no German parts had been installed.

• The shipments to Iraq's manufacturing facility at Taji were made without the knowledge of the German government. Once it became clear that the material shipped was intended for military purposes, the government stopped deliveries, even though some of the goods affected were not even subject to authorization. The shipments included ordinary machine tools that may be exported to any part of the world without registration.

I emphatically reject the connection established by Michael Ledeen between the personal intervention by Foreign Minister Genscher on behalf of Kasar el Khadi [an Iraqi-born German citizen sentenced to death in Iraq as a spy], which was prompted solely by humanitarian reasons, and military or even chemical-weapons-related shipments to Iraq.

Equally absurd is the allegation that the Federal Republic of Germany received $50 billion for weapons supplied to Iraq. German exports to Iraq fall far short of this figure. What *is* correct is that the Federal Republic was the only Western nation to recognize at an early stage the danger inherent in a massive arms build-up in the Gulf region and that—unlike some other Western nations—it has done everything possible *not* to get involved in the arms build-up.

There have been a few German companies which used illegal means either deliberately or negligently—this is for the courts to decide—to help Iraq develop its chemical-weapons capacity. No one deplores this more than Foreign Minister Genscher. He publicly condemned their actions on various occasions and spoke out for severe punishment of any violation of German foreign-trade and payments legislation.

I reject Michael Ledeen's article on the grounds that it is faulty, disregards the facts, and obviously intends to abet misunderstandings. It totally contradicts our policy of reconciliation and understanding between the German and the Israeli people—a policy of which Foreign Minister Genscher has been and will continue to be a most ardent advocate.

WOLF CALEBOW
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Michael Ledeen's exposé remains incomplete—larger issues loom. Who knows better than Jews themselves the pernicious dimensions of collective guilt? Accordingly, the greed of German companies, cited by Mr. Ledeen, in defiance of the law, must not be imputed to the nation at large. There is sufficient blame to go around, enough to include firms in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States. This should be borne in mind in order to avoid targeting Germany selectively for reprobation. . . . If Germany had not supplied Iraq, surely there were other nations ready, willing, and able to fill . . . the vacuum.

Unless there are international conventions binding *all* nations trafficking in components that bear the potential for mass destruction, is it reasonable to expect any one nation . . . to exercise constraints? If Germany is assigned a special obligation *sui generis* because of its Nazi past, we are visiting, albeit unwittingly perhaps, the sins of the fathers upon their children. Such a notion is alien to Judaism (and Christianity, too). It also violates secular ideas about fairness and decency. . . .

ELLIOTT A. COHEN
New York City

MICHAEL LEDEEN writes:

Wolf Calebow's letter is yet one more effort on the part of the German government to falsify the historical record. Instead of responding to the evidence provided in my article, he sets up a series of straw men, which he triumphantly dismantles. The most egregious of these falsifications is his repeated denial that Germany has provided "weapons" to Iraq (and, in the tradition of such rhetorical misdirection, he chooses his words carefully, claiming that the Germans "stopped authorizing weapons exports," or that Germany suspended "deliveries of armaments"). But that was not my claim; I wrote that Germany had provided Iraq with the *technology to manufacture weapons of mass destruction*. And so it did, with relentless consistency.

The prime contractor for the monstrous Samarra *chemical*-weapons complex (producing poison gas) was the Karl Kolb Company, the same firm that played such an active role in Qaddafi's chemical-weapons factory in Rabta, Libya

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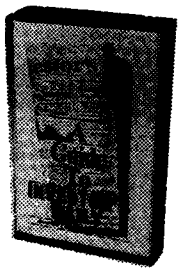

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(and which is now up to its neck, along with other German firms, in similar projects in Syria). The other chemical-weapons factory was at Salman Pak, in Iraq, and it, too, was built with a German prime contractor, Thyssen Rheinstahl Technology. The same holds true for *weapons* manufacture, for the largest weapons complex in the entire Middle East was built thanks to the participation of over 100 German companies, foremost among them Ferrostaal and Kloeckner. This latter company worked under contract directly to a department of the Iraqi War Ministry. Iraqi *missile* development was carried out at the huge Sa'ad-16 project at Mosul, where the general contractor was Gildemeister Projecta Limited, and the key subcontractor was Messerschmidt-Boelkow-Blohn, the airplane and missile manufacturer that figured so prominently in the secret international project to develop the Condor missile, itself destined for Iraq. And of course the Iraqi *nuclear* project was also assisted by German firms, including the aptly-named Nukem Company (uranium); H & H Metallform (machinery to manufacture high-speed centrifuges); and Export-Union GmbH, now under investigation for providing special steel for nuclear technology. And this is a short list that could be expanded for many pages.

These projects did not involve the sale of "weapons," but rather of technology, know-how, and some materials that the Iraqis needed to make their own weapons of mass destruction. Some of these materials and technologies were "dual-use" (that is, they could be used for both military and civilian applications).

Mr. Calebow's second bit of misdirection is to claim that Germany actively attempted to stop the flow of murderous technology to Iraq. Indeed, he even has the nerve to claim that Germany "enacted legislation penalizing any involvement by German citizens . . . in the production of weapons of mass destruction." This is false; the legislation was indeed *proposed* by the Kohl government, but it was voted down in the Bundesrat, and an official of the German Embassy in Washington should have known about the actions of his parliament.

But quite aside from this specific bit of legislation, Mr. Calebow would have us believe that the German government was trying to stop the flow of murderous technology to Iraq, even claiming that as soon as the government knew anything about such practices, "investigating authorities were brought in." Some effort! To date, exactly one firm has been convicted for exporting lethal technology, and this was not for Iraq, but for Libya. Some nine or ten others are under investigation, a pitiful number when it is known that during the embargo period alone, the United States government alerted Germany to 110 cases of German firms violating the embargo. One of these, as I wrote, was a German firm shipping technology for the Iraqi nuclear program via Pakistan. So much for the claim of German concern, and so much for the claim that the German government did not know what was going on.

This brings us to the third of Mr. Calebow's linguistic exercises: he indignantly rejects my alleged claim that there was a connection between Foreign Minister Genscher's intervention on behalf of a German intelligence agent imprisoned in Iraq, and "military or even chemical-weapons-related shipments to Iraq." I never wrote that there was such a connection. I simply wrote that since Genscher had taken a personal interest in the case, he must have known that the man in question was involved in German sales to the chemical-weapons complex at Samarra (the man was arrested in Germany on these charges last summer).

Fourth, Mr. Calebow triumphantly denies that Germany received $50 billion for "weapons supplied to Iraq." I never wrote that either; I wrote that Iraq spent $50 billion to acquire technology (including German technology) for producing weapons of mass destruction.

Fifth, Mr. Calebow claims that the German government stopped shipments to Taji "once it became clear that the material shipped was intended for military purposes." Does that not condemn him with his own testimony? The German government had been told, not once but dozens of times by American, Israeli, and even German intelligence officials what Taji was all about. The government did not choose to investigate until the complex was virtually completed. And so it virtuously terminated German assistance once the evil work was done.

Finally, there is the matter of German-manufactured components for the Scuds. News media all over the world reported Israeli anger at Germany, which was conveyed directly to Genscher when he went to Jerusalem. Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Arens told Genscher that the Scuds contained German-manufactured parts. And the leading spokesman for the opposition SPD—Hans-Jochen Vogel—rose on the floor of the Bundestag on January 31 to say:

> The report that in 1989 the export of missile parts to Iraq was approved . . . has . . . been largely confirmed by the Economics Ministry. This fact means that, with the knowledge of federal government authorities, German firms . . . helped extend the range of these [Scud] missiles, thus making it possible for them to reach Israel. . . .

These are reliable sources, but Mr. Calebow insists there were no German-manufactured parts in the missiles that fell on Israel. I have checked and found the following:

- The Scuds' range was extended thanks to *technology* that had been provided to Iraq by Germany.
- German-manufactured parts to improve the Scuds were provided to Iraq in 1990, but were not yet operational when the war started.
- A new, improved Iraqi missile (the Al-Abas), using German technology, was in the works but was not completed in time for the war.

Thus Mr. Calebow is playing with words again: these facts fully justify my conclusion that the missiles that fell on Israel were the perfect symbols of German moral corruption, "weapons of destruction from the Soviet empire, perfected by the Germans."

One last point: the reason I wrote about Germany was that the Germans contributed the lion's share of lethal technology. I did not suggest a blanket condemnation of the German people, nor do I believe that the rest of the world is pure in such matters. In the period following the Gulf War, the Bush administration has considerably relaxed export controls on a vast range of technologies, including many that will be used to manufacture more weapons of mass destruction. So it seems—and I want to make it quite clear, in response to Elliott A. Cohen—that the moral corruption of which the German government, and particularly Foreign Minister Genscher, are unfor-

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tunately guilty, is not limited to German soil. Sadly, our own leaders are taking the same path. It would be a real tragedy if the Bush administration (with barely a peep from Congress or the media) continued this dangerous behavior at precisely the moment when the moral shortcomings and strategic costs of such a policy have just been demonstrated to all mankind.

The Russian Classics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As the author of *Russian Classics in Soviet Jackets* (Columbia University Press, 1962), I was understandably interested in Jacques Barzun's "Russian Politics in the Russian Classics" [May]. Interested and, frankly, puzzled why a retired and very distinguished historian from my alma mater would stray so far from his specialty. I shall not dispute Mr. Barzun's opinions, however questionable these may be, or such scholarly lapses as the statement that Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin* is but the "Western" title of the work (the Russian title is the same!), or the assertion that it was Pushkin who coined the term Superfluous Man rather than Turgenev. What must be challenged, however, are Mr. Barzun's, well, unconventional readings of the literary texts—in the strictest sense of the term.

Thus, Mr. Barzun writes, "When he [Eugene Onegin] discovers his own love for her [Tatyana], she turns him down and marries someone else." Wrong. Eugene first declares his love for the lady when she is already married. Though she still loves him, she turns down the offer of an adulterous affair.

In Mr. Barzun's synopsis of Gogol's *Inspector General* the penniless adventurer Khlestakov, is allowed "to make love to the mayor's wife and daughter both." Wrong again. He does not make love to either woman.

In Aleksandr Ostrovsky's play *The Storm*, according to Mr. Barzun, the tyrannical merchant "Dikoy's wife Katerina, a woman of intelligence and sensibility, has an affair with a young man." Not true. Dikoy had no wife.

With one opinion, however, I will take issue. A grown woman's totally loveless and perverse seduction of a young boy (in Fedor Sologub's *Petty Demon*) and her systematic encouragement of his transvestite and bisexual tendencies is, to Mr. Barzun, "tender, touching love." A matter of taste, I suppose.

MAURICE FRIEDBERG
Department of Slavic Languages
and Literatures
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

JACQUES BARZUN writes:

I am much obliged to Maurice Friedberg for reading my article so closely and catching—not quite so many errors as he imagines. To begin with the Pushkin title: *Eugene* is not Yevgeny, and *Onegin* as commonly spoken in English renders hardly one sound of the original. It is as if Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* were "known in the West" (my phrase) as William Master.

Next, the Superfluous Man. See Harkins, *Dictionary of Russian Literature*, under that heading, p. 373: "The term superfluous was first used in this sense by Pushkin to describe his hero Eugene Onegin and was popularized by Turgenev. . . ."

Third, I am told that in *The Inspector General* Khlestakov does not make love to the mother and daughter. Turn to Act III, where among similar speeches he says to Anna: "To stand beside you is already happiness." He bewails the hardships of travel and winds up: ". . . if it weren't for this occasion (*looking at Anna and striking a pose*) which has rewarded me for everything." His gallantry is effective. In the next scene Anna "is in love" and says: "He looked at me all the time." And Maria chimes in: ". . . he was looking at me." Later, she tells the hero's servant, "Kiss your master for me."

Mr. Friedberg is right at last when he points out that in the Ostrovsky play Dikoy has no wife: *mea culpa*; I confused Dikoy with Tikhon. I am grateful for this release of the interesting Katerina from the embraces of the unspeakable Dikoy.

But with this item the impressive list of errata comes down to a single erratum, one of no consequence to the thesis linking my dozen-and-a-half masterpieces.

I am also thankful that although in speaking of the love story in

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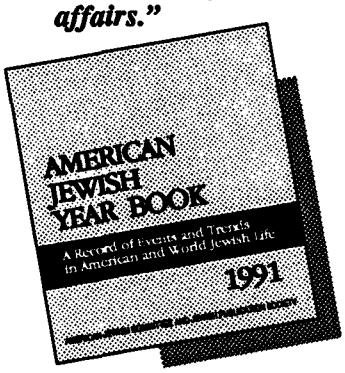

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Sologub I did not specify the young boy as the touching figure, Mr. Friedberg grants me the right to my own taste.

Anti-Psychiatry & John Locke

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "The Ideology of Homelessness" [March], Joseph Adelson launches an attack on what he calls "anti-psychiatry." The attack is rife with imprecision, inaccuracies, and straw-man arguments.

Mr. Adelson begins his article by citing the pathetic case of a "deranged man" who shouts incoherently about conspiracy. He claims that his example represents only the tip of the iceberg of homelessness in America, a problem he attributes to the precipitous emptying of mental hospitals, "perhaps the greatest social-policy fiasco of an era which specialized in them." As a result, Mr. Adelson says, there were "[T]ens of thousands of insane people on the streets." Leaving aside the use of the word "insane," which is neither a medical nor (currently) a psychiatric term, it should be noted that Mr. Adelson then creates a strange causal continuum leading to his ultimate *bête noire*: "anti-psychiatry." He attributes the "decision to empty the mental hospitals" to "an ideological decision deriving from strong convictions about both the nature of psychosis and the function of the hospital." This ideology is traced from 1950's "behaviorist learning theory" to the critics of personality-theory orthodoxy to "situationism" and finally to "anti-psychiatry."

This dubious continuum strangely links situationism, a view which locates the cause of behavior *outside* the individual and in the environment, with anti-psychiatry which, in the case of Dr. Thomas Szasz, locates the cause *within* the individual.

There is more than a little confusion here, becauase Mr. Adelson never defines what he means by anti-psychiatry. Whose anti-psychiatry does he mean? That of R.D. Laing, who celebrated the mentally ill as having unique perspectives? Of Timothy Leary, who glorified drug-taking? Or of Thomas Szasz, who never did either? In our opinion, Mr. Adelson should be—but isn't—addressing Dr. Szasz's critiques (including, for example, his opposition to the medicalization of deviance). Dr. Szasz is arguably "the premier critic of his profession," as psychiatrist-turned-columnist Charles Krauthammer, a friendly and well-respected source for Mr. Adelson's point of view, calls him.

Mr. Adelson cites *Madness in the Streets* by Rael Jean Isaac and Virginia C. Armat with approval as providing "answers" to what he depicts as anti-psychiatry's fatuous attacks, but the book, . . . though extensively researched, is very poorly reasoned and argued. The authors never define anti-psychiatry, either, nor, like Mr. Adelson, do they define mental illness, despite using the term repeatedly as if its meaning were self-evident. . . . Their book, termed "dazzling" by Mr. Adelson, is filled with polemics . . . and tautologies. Moreover, it frequently and substantially misrepresents Dr. Szasz's views. . . . But though it is important to point out the weaknesses of this work, since Mr. Adelson cites it as a major contribution to the debate over the validity of psychiatric practice and as a "devastating book" likely to aid in anti-psychiatry's "demise," our main focus here is on Mr. Adelson. . . .

For purposes of discussion we accept that Dr. Szasz is a major player in what is (inaccurately) called the anti-psychiatry movement, though Mr. Adelson never mentions him, much less engages any of his arguments. Further, we will assume that Mr. Adelson is referring to Dr. Szasz when he rails against anti-psychiatry. . . . So let us look at a few of Mr. Adelson's arguments and implications regarding the homeless and mental illness and see how well they stand up to Dr. Szasz's anti-psychiatry.

Mr. Adelson argues that anti-psychiatry led to the irresponsible forcing-out into the streets of psychiatrically hospitalized patients. But in fact, Dr. Szasz opposed such forced exits. As he wrote in 1980:

> Just as years ago "crazy" people were incarcerated in mental hospitals against their will—now they are evicted from them against their will. . . . In the name of doing something good *for* mental patients, once more something terrible is being done *to* them.

More recently he wrote:

> Institutionalizing human beings in the name of psychiatric care was, as now nearly everyone admits, a shame. Deinstitutionalizing them in the name of psychiatric progress is a sham.

Mr. Adelson equates "psychosis" and "mental illness," in one case making them synonymous and often using them interchangeably. This is becoming a rhetorical staple of those who cite the strangest and most likely brain-diseased individuals as the prototype of all the people now presumed to be mentally ill in one sense or another. Yet the nature of the evidence regarding the biological basis for some behaviors labeled as schizophrenia is dramatically different from the almost total absence of such evidence regarding most other types of behavior labeled as mental illness.

In recent years biological psychiatrists believe they have established that schizophrenia is a disease, as evidenced by the structural and chemical abnormalities discovered in the brains of some schizophrenics. The notion that some people labeled schizophrenic have a brain disease is accepted unquestioningly by the public and, we might note, was never excluded as a possibility in any of the writings of Dr. Szasz.

Having provided some interesting evidence and having won acceptance for the view that one type of mental illness may be a bona-fide disease, mental-health interests try to transfer the credibility of schizophrenia research to imply that all mental illness constitutes proven brain disease. The hope is that if it is accepted that there is an identifiable brain disease at the root of behaviors labeled as schizophrenic, it will simply be assumed that there is an established brain disease at the root of the tremendous range of behaviors that have at times been labeled as mentally ill. . . .

Mr. Adelson argues that "the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology" have suffered from the difficulty of "science easily overcom[ing] dogma." This is a strange depiction of antagonists' roles, since the most compelling attack on those disciplines from Karl Popper to Thomas Szasz is the claim that the disciplines are pseudo-medicine and pseudo-science masquerading as medicine and science.

Dr. Szasz disputes the scientific, as well as the medical, identity of psychiatry, arguing that there is no illness demonstrated in the great preponderance of cases of what is termed mental illness. This is, as Dr. Szasz has now convinced many

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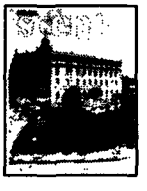

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others, no mere semantic disagreement. Perspectives on deviant behavior profoundly affect public policy. The choice of whether to call or not to call certain behaviors, illnesses will have tremendous consequences in responsibility, sympathy, legal status, and funding currently accorded to those who could be defined as suffering from various medically-based deviant behaviors, from alcoholism to mental illness in general.

Anti-psychiatry may indeed be doomed to "vanish," as Mr. Adelson predicts, if by anti-psychiatry he means such ludicrous views as some of those that Isaac and Armat cite as prominent in the anti-psychiatry of Timothy Leary and R.D. Laing. However, if Mr. Adelson is referring to the views of Dr. Szasz and others who question the pretentiousness of psychiatry and the medicalization of deviant behavior, his view is contradicted by the many new attacks on the insanity plea, the medical model in general, and the allegedly medical basis of the endless array of behavioral "addictions" from alcoholism to "pathological gambling" (as well as their "treatment" programs).

And, finally, regarding the anti-psychiatry of Dr. Szasz, it is interesting to note the statement of Dr. Thomas Detre, director of the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic, who acknowledged several years ago that some of what Thomas Szasz has argued over the years is now psychiatric orthodoxy.

RICHARD E. VATZ
Towson State University
Towson, Maryland

LEE S. WEINBERG
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although Joseph Adelson complains that "weak, irrelevant, or nonexistent findings" were allowed to triumph over good research in dealing with the mentally ill, this phrase describes Mr. Adelson's own non-findings in regard to John Locke. Five times Mr. Adelson makes Locke and things Lockean into the butt of criticism. Can he produce from Locke's own words five quotations (or four, or three) in support of the views that he puts into Locke's mouth?

In the absence of exact words from Locke, we have only what Mr. Adelson calls "the empiricist tradition deriving from John Locke." In this supposed tradition, according to Mr. Adelson, one "must concentrate on what was visible and external and measureable, and eschew speculating about such ineffables as 'the mind.' "

Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* gives the lie to Mr. Adelson's parody. Far from eschewing mind (Book 11, Chapter 11 is called "Of Discerning and Other Operations of the Mind"), Locke gives it central importance in his doctrine of primary and secondary qualities, for the latter are only "in the mind." Far from concentrating on what is external and measureable, the *Essay* makes personal identity depend on continuity of internal memory. Far from eschewing ineffables, Locke, as a believing Christian, speculates about God and the soul (Book IV, Chapter 10 is called "Of Our Knowledge of the Existence of God").

What textual basis does Mr. Adelson have when he says "behaviorism was the heir . . . of Locke"? Among philosophers, Locke is famous for his anti-behaviorist speculation that the soul, representing a personal identity that is psychological rather than bodily, could be interchanged between a rich man and a poor one.

How much of Locke has Mr. Adelson read? He imagines a "Lockean tradition" of "an organism empty, passive, entirely pliable, lacking in will or purpose and without tendency." Yet although Locke takes the mind as empty of innate ideas, it does not follow that he thinks the mind is passive, since Book II describes the mind's power to combine "simple ideas" into "complex ideas" and "mixed modes." Far from thinking that people are lacking in will, Locke affirms freedom of the will.

Mr. Adelson misrepresents Locke's political philosophy as much as his theory of mind. Mr. Adelson says "the Lockean spirit . . . now become[s] aggressively political," but aggressiveness has no political basis in the author of *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, which spoke against the real aggressiveness of religious bigotry in Europe.

Mr. Adelson conjures up a "Lockean formula and its egalitarian extension." This supposed egalitarianism, however, is debunked by Crawford Macpherson in his *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, which notes that Locke gives importance to anti-egalitarian property rights, so important in the class system of his time. Far from being "egalitarian," the *Second Treatise of Government* explains why white colonists were justified in expropriating Indians' property in North America.

GREG LANNING
Vancouver, British Columbia

JOSEPH ADELSON writes:

I long ago learned not to argue with those who believe in lost causes. In high school, I tried to persuade one of my friends that Trotsky was not likely to make a comeback. No luck. More recently, I told a humanities professor that Marxist economics did not have much of a future, except as an oxymoron. No luck again. So I have little heart for one more hopeless debate, this time on anti-psychiatry. In my view, it is dead, history, overtaken by events, specifically by the steady accretion of findings from empirical research. Many psychological disorders do have a biological or genetic component, not just the schizophrenias, but also many of the depressions, and some of the compulsions and eating disorders and panic states and perhaps some of the addictions. And more to come, I would guess. In any case, what I would say about Thomas Szasz's doctrine has already been said, brilliantly, by Charles Krauthammer in his collection, *Cutting Edges*.

On Locke: my article borrowed the idea of a Lockean tradition from Gordon Allport, who found it clarified a continuing division in psychology, separating those who emphasize experience and learning from those who posit innate internal dispositions. That is hardly an eccentric idea; if anything it is commonplace. Here is my desk dictionary's definition of *tabula rasa*: "The mind before it receives the impressions gained from experience, esp. the unformed featureless mind in the philosophy of Locke." Here is Bertrand Russell in his history of philosophy:

> Locke may be regarded as the founder of empiricism, which is the doctrine that all our knowledge . . . is derived from experience. Accordingly, the first book of the *Essay* is concerned in arguing, as against Plato, Descartes, and the scholastics, that there are no innate ideas or principles.

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Here is John Passmore, another distinguished philosopher, adducing Locke's belief that humans are intrinsically neither evil nor good, that at birth "their minds are already empty room." The "educator can move into that empty room and furnish it with habits, thereby bestowing upon the child his moral character." Hence, "moral education is essentially habit-formation." Can anyone seriously doubt the connection between that position and behaviorism, past and present? Or its connection to *current* modes of egalitarianism?

I took pains to say that I was writing about the empiricist tradition Locke (largely) founded and continues to personify, not Locke's philosophy *in toto*. I would not dream of doing otherwise. Locke was prolific (ten volumes in the *Collected Works*), wrote on a great range of topics from epistemology to politics to religion, and was notoriously inconsistent, so much so that most commentators chide him for it, Russell even poking fun at him gently. Above all, there is an ambiguity (or complexity) in Locke's writing which has invited a startling variety of interpretations. I call Greg Lanning's attention to the following passage from C. Fred Alford's book, just published, on the philosophy of the self, which contains a searching discussion of those ambiguities:

> One of the most striking things about the secondary literature on Locke is not merely the diversity, but the polarity, of opinions. For Vaughan, Locke is an anarchic individualist, for whom the individual is the only value. For Kendall, on the other hand, Locke is a more thoroughgoing (and hence more dangerous) theorist of the general will than Rousseau. Macpherson sees Locke as a defender of possessive individualism, whereas Dunn sees the key to Locke's theory in the religious doctrine of the calling. Strauss looks at Locke and sees Hobbes.

He then goes on to comment on Locke's contradictions, as so many others have done.

One of those contradictions, by the way, is on display in Mr. Lanning's own letter. On the one hand, Locke is against the aggressiveness of religious bigotry; on the other, he condones aggressiveness against the American Indians. And please don't tell me there is a higher synthesis where this contradiction vanishes.

In short, there are many Lockes to pick, but no single key.

Stalin & Stalinism

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his review of Walter Laqueur's *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations* [Books in Review, April], Leon Aron overlooks an important statement Laqueur makes: "Stalin and Stalinism were apparently genuinely popular." In the course of his book, however, Laqueur submits no evidence to support this opinion.

The German biographer Emil Ludwig once said to Stalin: "It seems to me that . . . to a certain extent the stability of Soviet power is based on fear." The dictator replied: "You are mistaken. . . . Do you really think that it would be possible to retain power for fourteen years and to have the backing of the masses, millions of people, owing to methods of intimidation and fear? No, that is impossible."

But Yagoda, head of the GPU, indiscreetly admitted to an American correspondent, William Reswick, "We are a minority in a vast country. Abolish the GPU and we are through." . . .

Ludwig might have asked Stalin: "How is it possible for a minority party (the Bolsheviks won less than 24 percent of the vote in 1917) which killed millions of its own people, and which inflicted terrible economic conditions upon its people, to have the backing of the masses?" If Ludwig had said this, it is doubtful whether he would have gotten out of the country—he probably would have met with an unfortunate "accident."

Stalin did resort to various theatrical performances to win public support, but his main concern was with the foreign media. Inside the USSR, people expressed support because they had no other choice. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, for example, told the story of the factory manager who, being the first to stop applauding in a tribute to Stalin, was arrested. The evidence suggests that inwardly people hated the regime.

George F. Kennan told in his memoirs of a huge spontaneous demonstration of Soviet citizens outside the U.S. embassy in Moscow at the end of war in 1945. According to Kennan, the people went wild, but why in front of the American embassy? Obviously they were desperately trying to send a political message to U.S. officials. A demonstration like that normally could not take place, but VE-Day gave the people an excuse. Soviet officials saw the meaning in a flash, but Kennan, and most U.S. officials, seemed politically obtuse.

In October 1947, *Modern Review* published an article titled "Voice Out of Russia" by an anonymous but prominent Soviet specialist which stated that so far as the workers were concerned, "perhaps 5 percent among them are in favor of the Soviet regime" while "among the peasants you find no supporters of the regime." (Stalin was still very much in power in 1947!)

More recently Viktor Suvorov has written: "If . . . if . . . if only someone had realized how the Russians loathe Communism." The available evidence suggests that this was, and is, closer to the truth than Laqueur's observation.

Robert E. Walters
Winter Park, Florida

Leon Aron writes:

I thank Robert E. Walters for drawing my attention to Walter Laqueur's remark. That the incessant and deafening propaganda secured a measure of genuine popular support for the cult of Stalin no one who lived through that period would deny. Yet I doubt that the author meant his comment to be interpreted more broadly, viz., as an endorsement of *Stalinism* by most Soviet people. Walter Laqueur's entire *oeuvre* shows that he knows very well both the real nature of Stalinism and the depth of popular hatred of it.

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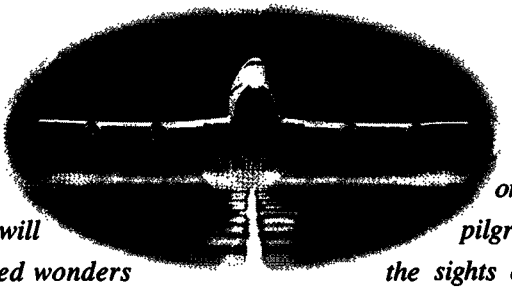

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What to Do About the Soviet Collapse

Vladimir Bukovsky

1. Who Won the War?

After faithfully following the Gulf War for 44 days and nights, fascinated by the human drama, the "smart" weapons, and the intense debates about the "new world order," I must have fallen asleep in front of my television set at a crucial moment. For when I awoke on the morning of February 28, I could not understand what had happened. Suddenly, Desert Storm was over, but all I could see were jubilant celebrations in Baghdad. As for the coalition leaders, they were enthusiastically talking about negotiating with Saddam Hussein over POW's and over the destruction of his remaining Scuds and chemical weapons. So, I asked myself, who had won the war? Surely not the coalition: those who win do not negotiate, they give orders; and those who are defeated do not negotiate either, they obey.

My bewilderment was deepened when I remembered how often it had been said that this war was not being waged against the Iraqi people, with whom we had no quarrel of any kind, but against Saddam Hussein and his regime. In fact, the people of Iraq had been perceived as allies and were called upon to overthrow their dictator, branded a war criminal who deserved a Nuremberg-type trial. Yet Saddam now seemed to be about the only person in Iraq who had not suffered as a result of the war.

It was only when the plight of the Kurds attracted public sympathy that the inconsistency of the coalition's behavior was widely recognized. But why was it not apparent on February 28, or even earlier? On the one hand, we were told that the aim of Desert Storm was to remove the threat of aggression in the region (Saddam Hussein and his regime), and to restore "stability"; but, on the other hand, we were also told that the coalition partners wanted to preserve the "territorial integrity" of Iraq and, in any event, would limit their action to liberating Kuwait. The future of Iraq was supposed to be "determined by the Iraqi people."

Now, with all due respect to the wisdom of our policy-makers, how could these two objectives be reconciled? If Saddam Hussein and his regime remained in power, the threat of aggression in the region would remain, albeit delayed by the need to restore his military might. If, however, the people of Iraq were allowed to determine their own future, then the territorial integrity of Iraq would suffer. In either case, where would "stability" be? Did anyone seriously expect Saddam to become a peace-loving character, or the Kurds to abandon their century-long struggle for independence?

Clearly, our policy-makers did not know what they were dealing with. Nor did they bother to learn. The United States, the leader of the coalition, was more preoccupied with exorcising the ghosts of Vietnam than with solving the region's problems. Once again, it was fighting itself and its past and, once again, American politicians robbed their armed forces of a deserved victory. One was forced to conclude that the 200-year-old idea of avoiding foreign entanglements still dominated American political thinking. Hence the desire to hide behind the United Nations (which is far more entangling than any possible alliance), and behind the principle of noninterference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state. What strange logic: relentlessly bombing Iraq was not considered interference in its internal affairs, while helping Iraqis to get rid of a tyranny was.

But let us imagine that at the beginning of January the ruling Baath party had decided to replace Saddam Hussein with another figure, and that this new leader of Iraq had proclaimed a program of democratic reform. At that point a mere promise to withdraw from Kuwait would have been sufficient to keep the coalition at bay. In addition, our policy-makers undoubtedly would have convinced themselves that they had a duty to support the new reformist Iraqi leader, and even to offer him economic aid lest his more hawkish rivals in the Baath party take over again.

Vladimir Bukovsky recently returned to the Soviet Union for the first time since 1976, when he was banished after having been imprisoned for twelve years as a dissident. The president of Resistance International and a frequent commentator on developments in the Soviet Union, he now lives in Cambridge, England.

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And when he finally did withdraw from Kuwait, he would have been applauded and celebrated and perhaps even awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, while the entire world would have paid the cost of building new barracks for his retreating troops.

RIDICULOUS as this scenario may sound, it is exactly what has happened in a far more important recent conflict. Here, too, we awoke one morning to a sudden announcement that a war—the cold war—was over and, try as we might, we could not find out who had won it. All we could hear were enthusiastic speeches by Western leaders about "new opportunities for improved relations" with the Soviet Union, about negotiating arms reduction, and about the peace-loving, reform-minded Soviet ruler, Mikhail Gorbachev, who had made these great opportunities possible. And so it was that in the first six years of Gorbachev's reign, about $45 billion was poured by a grateful world into his coffers in order to "save" him from the "hardliners."

By now East-West relations have become so dialectical that even Hegel would feel dizzy: Germans pay billions to Soviet troops for staying on their soil because they want them to leave, while Americans consider how much economic aid is necessary to induce Gorbachev not to maintain his present level of military spending and not to keep pouring money into Cuba, Afghanistan, and Vietnam.

So who won the cold war? Who lost it? Or was it a draw? If the Soviet Union lost (as we all assume), the changes which have taken place there must be a direct result of that defeat, rather than of a sudden change of heart among the Communist leaders. And if this is so, we do not need to pay for the Soviets' retreat, to prop them up with all kinds of aid, or to be afraid of recognizing the independence of the Baltic states. But if we are still scared to do any of the above lest the "hardliners" return and start up the cold war again, then the Soviets have not yet lost, and we have not yet won. Like the coalition troops in Iraq, we simply stopped one day too early, hastily claiming victory while the business of war was not yet finished. And, very much as in Iraq, the people are left to pay for this unfinished business with their blood and livelihoods.

I wonder what the West is going to do now. Will it send UN troops to protect Armenians, Georgians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Moldavians from the rages of the Soviet "republican guards" while still continuing to support those very "guards" through Gorbachev? Will it attempt to feed 300 million people on one-sixth of the globe's surface by dropping food from planes? Or will it placidly watch the starvation and misery caused by the half-measures of Gorbachev's perestroika?

2. Glasnost and Perestroika

CONTRARY to a popular illusion, glasnost and perestroika were not invented by Gorbachev: the blueprint of this reform program was worked out a few years before he came to power, apparently under Yuri Andropov. Although glasnost and perestroika were calculated to look like an introduction of democracy and a market economy, their true goal was to salvage "socialism" and to preserve Communist-party rule. In external relations, their purpose was to increase Soviet influence in Europe by improving the image of the Soviet state and by returning to a policy of détente after the spell of cold war in the early 1980's.

Such fluctuations of policy from détente to cold war and back, caused by a contradiction between the economic deficiency of the USSR and its global ambitions, are typical of Soviet history. This time, however, the crisis was so severe that it threatened the Soviet Union's superpower status: the USSR could not continue its military competition with the West, as well as its expansion in the third world, without a dramatic improvement in its economy. Hence the urgent need for détente on the one hand, and for a within-the-system economic readjustment on the other. To put it plainly: the Soviet leaders needed to preserve their military advantage and their client-states while fixing their economy, and that was impossible without considerable Western assistance, both economic and political.

Although Western assistance was enthusiastically granted, thereby reducing the burdens of empire, repairing the economy turned out to be far more difficult than had originally been thought. It simply could not be achieved without certain political adjustments. For in order to increase productivity, the entire system of socialist "production relations" would have to be dismantled and replaced by a market system of economic incentives, and that was bound to affect the Communist party's control. The time was long gone when people joined the party or listened to it because of their revolutionary enthusiasm. Once that enthusiasm died, the party had to rely on its exclusive right to promote or to dismiss, to enrich or to impoverish, any individual in the country. But if people were now going to be promoted according to their talents and rewarded according to their performance, who would bother to join the party, or listen to it?

The trouble was that the reforms would have to be implemented through the same party apparatus whose power they strove to diminish. This structural constraint alone made far-reaching reforms quite impossible. Yet if they did not reach far enough, they would not work.

A way out of this impasse was sought in glasnost and perestroika—a well-organized, well-

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planned retreat of the party from the position of absolute master to that of a senior partner. One junior partner—the Soviet population—was promised a degree of participation in governing itself, greater cultural autonomy, more information, a higher standard of living, fewer restrictions and repressions. Another junior partner—the West—was promised "peace and cooperation," more civilized behavior, and more openness. In exchange, the two junior partners were expected to help the party restore its control over the country, modernize the economy and make it productive, salvage the superpower status of the Soviet Union, and expand its influence into Western Europe.

But the success of any partnership depends on the cooperation of everyone involved, and while the West was completely thrilled with this "New Deal," the Soviet population was not about to follow Mark Twain's advice: to have constitutional rights and the common sense not to use them.

3. The People and the Party

By the end of 1989, it was already clear that Mikhail Gorbachev would not retain the title "Man of the Decade" which he had just been given by *Time* magazine. Suddenly, the mindless euphoria which had accompanied Gorbachev's five years in office was giving way to more sober thoughts, if not anxieties. Western public opinion was being invaded by the uneasy feeling that "poor Gorby," to quote Fred Barnes of the *New Republic*, was "shaping events as decisively as Czar Nicholas II did after World War I broke out." He was beginning to be perceived either as irrelevant or as an obstacle to further reforms. The French newspaper *Le Monde* summarized this new perception in a cartoon showing a crowd marching under the banner of perestroika, and Gorbachev running after them with the cry: "Wait for me, I am your leader!"

Ironically, this change of public perception occurred in the West just as Gorbachev made a first significant departure from Leninism by giving up the Communist party's monopoly on power. Dramatic as the event was, only a few observers described it as another "new victory over the conservatives"; most noted the practically unanimous show of hands in favor of the proposed change at the Central Committee session. So much for the "hardliners" and "conservatives" from whose clutches the West had been "saving" Gorbachev all those years.

Besides, one could hardly ascribe this decision to Gorbachev's reformist fervor. As many in the West still remembered, it had first been suggested by Andrei Sakharov, and later supported by the striking miners, only to be categorically rejected by Gorbachev himself just three months before the Central Committee session in which he finally embraced it.

By that time the leading role of the Communist parties had already been surrendered in every East European country (and in Lithuania as well), leaving Gorbachev under enormous pressure to follow suit. If he did not, the Communist party, as he himself admitted, would simply be "swept away by the pressure from below."

In short, it now began to dawn upon the Western publics that their hero, this great champion of democracy, was just trying to save the remnants of the Communist system, together with his own political hide. What was originally intended as a within-the-system readjustment had grown into a popular revolution threatening to bring the whole system down. As a result, Gorbachev's main preoccupation became—and has remained to this day—one of stalling the process he himself had unwittingly triggered.

There is nothing unusual in such a development: as Tocqueville observed long ago, the most dangerous moment for a despotic government is when it begins to change. Like so many reforming despots before him, Gorbachev made two basic miscalculations: he overestimated the strength of the ruling party, and he underestimated the people's hatred of the old regime. If, then, we owe anyone a debt of gratitude for the spectacular changes in the East, it is the people, not the despots.

This is especially true of Eastern Europe. Needless to say, Gorbachev never intended to destroy the Communist system in Eastern Europe, nor did he plan to hand East Germany over to NATO on a silver platter. On the contrary, he wanted to replace "hard-core" Communist regimes with a "soft-core" variety and, in doing so, to finish off NATO. The idea was to trade the Iron Curtain for something that Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev had all coveted in their time and failed to get: a neutralized "common European home."

One must admit that the plan was quite ingenious, at least in theory. After all, it made perfect sense to think that the West Germans would accept almost any conditions in order to be reunited with their Eastern brothers. NATO would then have no good reason to exist. Nor could the Americans stay in Europe once NATO had gone, particularly if skillfully stirred troubles in their Central American backyard continued to split them from Europe. And as soon as NATO disintegrated and the Americans went home, an appropriately modernized Soviet army would be the only real force on the continent. Its mere proximity would define the essence of European neutrality.

The first moves in this European gambit were played masterfully. The way Moscow pulled the plug on Honecker, Jakes, Zhivkov, and especially

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Ceausescu will be studied by many generations of scholars. But after so spectacular a beginning, the outcome was a complete disaster for the Kremlin strategists. No KGB analyst could fathom the depth of mistrust and hatred the people of Eastern Europe felt for any Communist leader, "liberal" or "conservative." Try as they might, the new Moscow puppets Krenz and Modrow, Mlynar and Mladenov could not possibly "stabilize" Eastern Europe and salvage the cause of socialism by promising to give it "a human face."

For not crushing the East European revolutions with his tanks, Gorbachev was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. But what else could he have done when he knew very well that tanks could only either save, or bring in clones of, the Honeckers and Husaks he was determined to replace? Besides, such intervention had been ruled out by the growing rebellion of nationalities within the Soviet Union proper.

THIS, too, as he later confessed, Gorbachev had failed to anticipate, and the fact that he did is truly revealing. Anyone even remotely familiar with the history of the Soviet Union knows that no nation ever joined it voluntarily. After the Russian empire disintegrated at the end of World War I (very much like other continental empires), it was glued together by Lenin with Marxist ideology in the course of the civil war, and then reinforced by Stalin in the course of World War II. The Soviet Union was therefore bound to break up as soon as the glue lost its cohesive force.

How, then, could Gorbachev have not foreseen that trouble would break out in such a multinational empire as a result of his statements on greater cultural autonomy and economic self-management in the occupied nations? Yet Gorbachev went beyond this. As we now know, the growth of the "popular fronts" in many republics was actually encouraged from Moscow, the idea being to create useful tools of perestroika which would be kept under tight control and directed accordingly.

Once again, the plan was quite clever, but totally unrealistic. Like almost everything else in Gorbachev's perestroika, it was borrowed from Lenin, who had advocated a broad coalition with non-Communist forces during the period of his New Economic Policy (NEP). Later this "front" technique was used by the KGB abroad in order to manipulate Western public opinion and political activity. Yet in those days, the party was still strong and vigorous, while the Western non-Communist forces had very little experience of "cooperation" with the Communists. Since the Soviet population under Gorbachev knew better, and since the party now consisted of bureaucrats and not of professional revolutionaries, the whole plan brought disaster. Confronted with an increasingly radicalized public mood, the leaders of the popular fronts (mostly local Communists) either had to join the crowd or get discarded. This, in turn, led to a crisis of the local Communist parties: they could save their credibility only by breaking off ties with Moscow. First, the Lithuanian, then the Latvian, Estonian, and Georgian parties did exactly that—but even so they were kicked out and the popular fronts quickly became truly democratic parties.

Meanwhile, having lost control over the mainstream national movements in the republics, Gorbachev had to rely on extremists as a counterforce. Practically every republic had a minority, indigenous or migrant, which was already viewing the growing nationalist movements with increasing alarm. Even without KGB manipulation, the history of their cohabitation was not all rosy; now, with a bit of effort, it was turned into a nightmare. All at once, there were pogroms, "ethnic clashes," and suffering minorities who, surely, must be protected by Moscow which "reluctantly" had to send in troops to restore law and order. Only occasionally did we get a glimpse of the true picture, as when, after the bloody operation in Baku last year, Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov admitted in an interview that the Soviet troops had been sent to Azerbaidjan not to protect the Armenian minority, but to prevent the nationalist popular front from taking power.

Gorbachev's policy (if one can call it by such a dignified name) is both cruel and short-sighted. It drags the country into the quagmire of civil war, while driving national movements, moderate and democratic at present, into an abyss of extremism. For if they fail to deliver the coveted national independence by peaceful democratic means, while the bloody provocations or artful dodgings of Moscow continue, the people's mood will be radicalized even further and they will find themselves more extremist leaders, as they already have done in Georgia.

Gorbachev's economic "policy" is no better. Even in the face of ultimate disaster he makes only the most grudging theoretical concession to the need for a market economy, while time and again repeating his incantations to "give socialism a second breath," as if it ever had a first one. One can impose socialist regulations on an already existing market, but to expect to create a "socialist market" where no market has existed for 62 years is like expecting a horse to be born harnessed.

There is by now only one way to avoid civil war in the Soviet Union, and that is to dissolve the "Union." But who will Gorbachev be if he should do that? An unelected president of a non-existing country? Equally, the only way to avert a spiraling round of food riots and strikes followed by new repressions is to introduce a market economy far more radically than was done in Poland.

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But where will Gorbachev's ruling elite, all those millions of apparatchiks, be if that happens? Standing in line for unemployment benefits? On trial for corruption and abuses of power?

So what can they do? They have no solutions, only tactical moves—such as proposing a new treaty of union with the republics, as was done at the meeting of the Central Committee in late July—aimed at slowing down the inevitable and hoping that sooner or later the people will get tired. Martial law is hardly an answer since it would further aggravate the crisis by adding a mutiny in the army to the general discontent in the country.

Gorbachev might even try something like this out of desperation. Yet the more power he acquires legally, the less power he has in reality, and if this process continues, he may end up as an absolute dictator over nothing. He is becoming as irrelevant as a foreman at the construction site of the Tower of Babel, with all the former builders quarreling in their different languages as the Tower crumbles to the ground.

4. Helping Russians

UNFORTUNATELY, the recent sobering of Western public opinion has not sufficiently affected the attitudes of Western policy-makers. Although, being short of cash themselves, they have backed away from the so-called "Grand Bargain" (the idea of handing over additional billions of dollars to Gorbachev in exchange for new reforms), they are instead resorting to technical aid and other indirect methods of propping him up.

Nor have they ruled out future infusions of cash; the Europeans, led by Germany, can be expected to go on pressing the Americans and the Japanese to dispense ever vaster sums to rescue Gorbachev, whom they all praised to the skies at the economic summit in London this past July. Never mind that economic aid—as the experience of the third world shows—invariably increases the role of government and encourages parasitism, not initiative. Never mind that genuine market reforms do not require Western taxpayers' money at all: on the contrary, they require a drastic reduction in the size and power of the state as a most important condition for attracting investment. Never mind all this: the only important consideration for Western policy-makers is, it would appear, to "save" their hero. And they still do not ask themselves a simple question: save him from whom? From his own people who want democracy, not "socialist pluralism"? From the people of the enslaved nations who want self-determination?

One can understand why Gorbachev made such spectacular miscalculations, overestimating the strength of his party and underestimating the people's hatred of it. But why do Western policy-makers repeat the same mistake? Why do they constantly ignore the people and always support their oppressors?

During a recent visit to Moscow I was asked the same question in every audience by people in all walks of life: why does the West insist on backing an unelected, hated, failed dictator, and why does it refuse to back leaders duly elected by the people? What do they want from us? What did we do wrong?

Certainly, after Gorbachev's unsuccessful attempt earlier this year to crush the democratic movement, no one in the country is going to take at face value his latest twist in the other direction. Nor can a pseudo-democrat like Eduard Shevardnadze with his pseudo-oppositional "Democratic Reform Movement" inspire the Russian people or gain their trust. Apart from everything else, Shevardnadze is still remembered as a torturer and executioner in his native Georgia. Boris Yeltsin, by contrast, *has* become a true democratic oppositionist, and as the elected President of the Russian Republic, he is well-placed to lead a process of healthy confrontation with the central authorities—a process that should be encouraged by the West. Bringing pressure on him to effect a "reconciliation" with Gorbachev, as the West has done instead, is not in the interests of the country, since no real reforms are possible by a compromise with the party.

Indeed, no one is likely to trust a party which abused the people for 73 years, even if it promises a full-fledged capitalist democracy. Contrary to Western perception, the Communist party is now a source of instability: it is too weak to govern, yet too strong to be removed peacefully. Further Western support of Gorbachev and his "Union" will only encourage the dying regime to use violence, just as Western support for the "territorial integrity" of Iraq (and more recently Yugoslavia) has done.

One might think that it would be only natural for Western democracies, and particularly the United States, to take the side of the growing national-democratic movements in the republics, to endorse the aspiration of the peoples there for freedom and democracy. Yet here again, we can see an example of the perverse logic according to which support for a dictatorship fighting its population is not regarded as interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, while support for the people is.

Ironically, it was the Soviet Union itself, as the champion of "wars of national liberation," which in 1970 got the UN General Assembly to enact the "Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Nations." According to this Declaration:

> Every state has a duty to refrain from any forcible action which deprives peoples of their right to self-determination, freedom, and inde-

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pendence. In their actions against resistance to such forcible action in pursuit of the exercise of self-determination, such peoples are entitled to seek and receive support in accordance with the purposes and principles of the [UN] Charter.

Why, then, does the West hesitate to support Lithuanians and Armenians, Latvians and Moldavians, when these nations are, under the Soviet Union's own doctrine, "entitled to seek and receive support" under international law?

And why do Western agencies, both governmental and private, promote disunity by turning Moscow into a kind of political Klondike where the competition for grants and deals not only exacerbates old rivalries but also stimulates new ones which reflect not the situation in Moscow itself but quarrels exported from Washington and New York? Why does the West find it so difficult to develop a coherent policy aimed at helping a strong and united democratic opposition to consolidate itself?

For the truth is that only the emergence of such a strong and united democratic opposition can stabilize the country by replacing the Communist party in power, dissolving the empire, and introducing painful economic reforms, very much as has already happened in Poland. Only a strong and united democratic opposition can prevent the excesses of violence and vengeance so common at a time of transition. Only a strong and united democratic opposition can avert civil war and mass starvation. And only a strong and united opposition can build the edifice of democracy on the ruins of totalitarianism. Helping such an opposition is, therefore, the best investment the West can make. And it would be considerably less expensive than trying to "save" Gorbachev.

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E Pluribus Nihil

Multiculturalism and Black Children

Midge Decter

THERE are few things more futile than the effort to second-guess history. Yet it is difficult not to wonder, especially at this moment in our national affairs, what might have happened had the civil-rights movement *not* made the schools a key focus of its attentions. We do not really know why so much civil-rights energy came to center so directly on the schools. Perhaps they seemed the institutions most vulnerable to outside pressure, or perhaps they seemed simply the most welcoming. Possibly it was Jewish influence in the early days of the movement that was responsible for the idea that getting an education—specifically, a college education—would be the quickest and easiest route into the middle class, and that if at long last black children were fairly treated they would head straight for college and then into the professional schools.

In any case, just suppose that, having established the principle in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* that legislatively segregated schools were unconstitutional, the movement had gone on to something else and let nature take its admittedly creeping course in the schools themselves. Suppose that civil-rights activists in major Northern cities had not insisted that what they called "*de facto* segregation" was just as reprehensible and unconstitutional as the *de jure* segregation of the South. Suppose they had instead made housing patterns their chief priority. (Who nowadays remembers that all those postwar slum-clearance public-housing projects were originally intended to be fully integrated but became predominantly black and Hispanic under great political pressure from those communities, who claimed their own greater entitlement to cheap housing, along with, most fatefully, the right not to be excluded on the grounds of having criminal records?) Or suppose that instead of attempting to impose school integration they had simply spent all their energies on improving the schools as they stood. Suppose all of these things: would little black kids in the big cities—theoretically the objects of the exercise—have been any worse off?

They have certainly had a lot going against them, these children. Forget for the moment their currently famous troubles at home. Forget, too, their history as the descendants of slaves and of the victims of Jim Crow. Apart from all this, there is the simple fact that many, many of them are members of a community of relatively recent migrants from the farm to the big city.

Were we European, we would call those migrants peasants. The education of peasants in the ways of metropolitan literacy and skills is a complex affair; no one anywhere on earth has yet figured out how to do it with either comfort or speed. Moreover, by some grim coincidence, a kind of unfunny historical joke, black migrants from off the farm came flooding into the big-city public schools of America at just the moment when these institutions had triumphantly assimilated the psychological and pedagogic theories made fashionable by the practitioners of progressive private education. Very roughly summed up, these theories held that children, with psychic support from their parents, could basically teach themselves to read and write while the schools led them to ever higher levels of noncompetitive socialization. While for the children of the educated upper middle class in private schools such ideas proved to be only mildly disastrous, for a majority of the children of unacculturated immigrants they were bound to be, and were, catastrophic.

Add to these natural, probably unavoidable, difficulties—difficulties enough to be getting on with—the fact that for nearly 30 years now, inner-city black children have, when it has come to their schooling, been little more than expendable counters in an ideological game. The game, moreover, is one whose rules and end terms have shifted with sometimes dizzying rapidity.

FIRST, the objective was racial integration. Implicit in the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Brown*—i.e., that segregated schools were *inherently* unequal—was an idea that in its translation to Northern school systems was itself profoundly racist. Though obviously unconscious of what they were saying when they argued for mandatory school busing—in cities of any size, the only way to achieve even minimal integration—civil-rights advocates were actually insisting

MIDGE DECTER, a frequent contributor to COMMENTARY, is a Distinguished Fellow of the Institute on Religion and Public Life in New York City.

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that without a sufficient number of white children in a classroom, black children would not be able to learn properly there.*

The argument took a variety of forms: the teachers would teach better if enough white children were present; white parents would be able to put up a better fight to improve conditions; the state would provide more resources; and so on. Whatever the argument, to oppose school busing was to earn the first dousing in what was to become a deluge of charges of racism; and in those early days, the word was to be found as much on the lips of white liberals as on those of black activists. (No one, of course, got around to asking whether black mothers were enthusiastic about having their children bused to schools in strange neighborhoods far from home; by extension, they, too, were merely pieces being moved around on the board.)

When school busing became a worse than pointless exercise—though there seem to be judges here and there around the country who have not yet heard the news—the demand shifted to money and services: for special programs, or for hiring black teachers to be role models, or for teaching the kids in "black English," or for rewriting the tests, or for turning budget and hiring control over to local community boards. Each of these measures was at one time or another offered as a decisive improvement for inner-city schools that meanwhile were becoming increasingly black, and whose students were failing at an alarming rate.

The point is, the school had been appointed to do it all, the whole job—not merely to teach, but to repair past injustice, to urbanize, and to become as well the source of psychic healing, physical health, and moral, ethical, and sexual upbringing. Small wonder that the schoolhouse roof began to buckle from the sheer weight of the load. And each time there was a new sign of cave-in, more weight was added to the burden.

Beyond the bitter joke that by, say, the late 1950's public-school pedagogy had become something even middle-class parents were struggling to compensate their children for, there was another. Just when inner-city kids were displaying an ever greater need for order and orderliness, the larger culture that surrounded them was getting caught up in an ever more shrill assertion of the demand for new areas of permissiveness called—how disruptively to these and all other children we have not yet begun to imagine—"rights."

Recently, the principal of a notoriously troubled high school in Brooklyn electrified, and elated, the student body (and, it is said, visibly improved academic performance) by requiring the boys to wear shirts, jackets, and ties to school every day. What ought to be most surprising about this event is how long it took to happen and how much courage on the principal's part had been needed. As for the boys in that school, pawns of a movement that from the very beginning had no faith in them and aspirants toward a culture that had no faith in itself, this may have been the first time it was borne in upon them that anybody cared.

Dismal historical coincidences aside, the black children of the metropolitan ghettos have, as everyone knows, profound troubles all their own. They are more likely than not to be living on welfare, to be fatherless and illegitimate, to be surrounded by the spectacles of alcohol and drug addiction, to be endlessly subject to temptations to crime—latterly even forced to dodge actual bullets—and to be quite passive about, or downright indifferent to, their own futures. So much we hear about them every day. Whatever the cures for such troubles—and one is forbidden by the law of life to suppose that there can be none—they surely cannot be administered in school.

NEVERTHELESS the school continues to be the recipient of an endless series of nostrums. And given the intractability of the condition—and the unspoken but implicit despair of the civil-rights activists over the failure of their ministrations—a new, and new kind of, struggle looms ahead. Now there is a move on in many states across the country to convert the schoolhouse from a place of disappointed longing to a place of plain and open hostility to its own real purposes.

In New York, the terms of this conversion have recently been spelled out by Thomas Sobol, the state Commissioner of Education. As are all government threats and promises, this one is contained in a report. Issued on June 13, 1991 under the title, "One Nation, Many Peoples: A Declaration of Cultural Interdependence," the report was drawn up by a group of experts—primarily school administrators, educators, and historians—brought together by Sobol, as the Executive Summary puts it,

> to review existing New York State social-studies syllabi and to make recommendations to the Commissioner of Education designed to increase students' understanding of American culture and its history; the cultures, identities, and histories of the diverse groups which comprise American society today; and the cultures, identities, and histories of other people throughout the world.

This might have seemed a rather tall order for a school system whose products, white *and* black, have been found wanting, for example, in any clear impression of which century witnessed the American Civil War and which, World War II. Those acquainted with the language of public

* The integrationists could never understand, or at least admit, that "white" was a meaningless term, especially in big cities, where as far as the issue of education was concerned, Jews were one thing, Italians another, the Irish still another. Like their belief in the magic of schooling, the integrationists' avowed belief in the existence of the "white community" would set them on a dangerous course.

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persuasion, however, will recognize in such a formula not a worthy if unattainable ambition but rather a warning signal for an oncoming attack of disingenuousness. This is a language that speaks of groups but means only minorities, that speaks of minorities but means mainly blacks, and that speaks of diversity but means the imposition of a single set of attitudes.

In addition, it is important to know that the Social Studies Review and Development Committee which issued this report was preceded two years earlier by another group, a Task Force, also convened by Sobol. It, too, was asked to review instructional materials to determine if they "adequately reflect the pluralistic nature of our society." Before that, it seems, the Task Force itself had had several predecessors. Since the 1970's, in fact, the New York State Board of Regents had commissioned a whole series of similar investigations, more or less focused on something originally called Global Education but later referred to as a "broader cultural perspective," and more generally known these days as "multiculturalism."

The 1989 Task Force, chaired by Hazel Dukes, then president of the Council of the New York Chapters of the NAACP, was somewhat less modestly, and much more honestly, named than its successor: Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence. Its report, "A Curriculum of Inclusion," was, as such documents go, on the flamboyant side. It contained certain undisguisedly sweeping and radical recommendations: for example, that New York State acquire an entirely new set of text materials more favorable to blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, and Asians along with a new state Department of Cultural Equality among whose duties would be the initiation of "intensive discussions" with textbook publishers and the definition of new standards of certification for teachers and principals that would involve "appropriate education and competence in multicultural education."

The somewhat ringing tone of the Task Force's recommendations was derived from an even brassier set of background resource papers, one prepared by a professor of African Studies at the City College of New York (CCNY), one by a professor of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriquenos of Hunter College, one by a representative of New York's "Native American" (i.e., American Indian) community, and one by an associate in the Department of Educational Foundations at Hunter College claiming to speak for the Asians. Hardly surprisingly, each of these resource people concluded that while New York had already made a commendable effort to cover minority experiences and values in its social-studies curricula, the current situation was unacceptable. At its best, they found, existing text material was multicultural only in a formal sense. In reality, the minority groups were still, they said, the objects of hurtful stereotyping, the kind of stereotyping that led inexorably to a series of "syndromes": for blacks, the "Tarzan Syndrome" or "Amos and [*sic*] Andy Syndrome"; for Asians, the "Charlie Chan Syndrome"; for Hispanics (your eyes do not deceive), the "Frito Bandito Syndrome"; and for "Native Americans," the "Lone Ranger and Tonto Syndrome."

We do not know whether Sobol was embarrassed by it or not, but in any case,"A Curriculum of Inclusion" set off alarm bells in certain public places. After which there followed a far more heated debate and a far more widespread and careful scrutiny than could ever have been intended either of "A Curriculum of Inclusion" itself or of the circumstances of its production.

One of the things turned up under this post-facto scrutiny were the racial theories of Leonard Jeffries, Jr., the CCNY professor who had prepared the background paper about the treatment of blacks. Aside from the by then already familiar claim that most of the truly valuable properties of Western civilization—such as the alphabet, the legal code, science and philosophy, and democracy—had originated in Africa and then been stolen without acknowledgment, Professor Jeffries had made and was most ardently teaching his students a new scientific discovery: that melanin, responsible for black skin pigmentation, was also responsible for a genetic difference in disposition. Thus blackness made people warmer, more caring, better disposed toward their fellow men, while the absence of melanin left whites, whom he called "the ice people," selfish, individualistic, aggressive, and hence innately militaristic.

Less than a year after these things were publicized, the Board of Regents approved the establishment of yet another committee to review the curriculum yet again and yet again to offer recommendations. This was to be Phase I in a five-stage plan whose purpose, wrote Sobol, "was to ensure that any syllabus review and revision undertaken would be thoughtful, scholarly, and apolitical." Here, as with Sobol's formal charge to the new committee, the phrase "thoughtful, scholarly, and apolitical" operated as a screen for the true purpose of the commission, which was obviously to make respectable a policy that had been permitted to move much too close to the edge of ridicule. Beneath the stunning generality of the call to increase students' understanding of all cultures everywhere—which taken at face value was no more than a call simply to improve education—the committee was implicitly charged to find an acceptable, or at least an acceptable-sounding, way to effect a surrender to multiculturalist demands.

To this charge the great majority of the committee's members enthusiastically responded. "[W]e are beginning to realize," they announce, again in the Executive Summary,

> that understanding and the ability to appreciate things from more than one perspective may be

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> as important as is factual knowledge in the goals of education. . . . [T]he social studies should not be so much concerned with "whose culture" and "whose history" are to be taught and learned as with the development of intellectual competence in learners, with intellectual competence viewed as . . . the capacity to view the world and understand it from multiple perspectives.

The report itself is long, elaborately organized, and otherwise bears all the earmarks of a committee-produced document, in which serious disagreements are thought to be taken care of by splitting the linguistic difference:

> We recognize that nation building, especially in so diverse a populace, requires that we give attention, not so much to our differences as to our commonalities. Some of us feel strongly that social studies should stress the nation's common values. . . . Others of us feel that those values . . . have become truncated as a result of the hegemonic ascendence of cultural elements . . . associated with our European ancestry alone. Thus the insistence on the inclusion of broader perspectives. . . .

Committee-style manners aside, however, the document as a whole comes down sternly on the side of those "broader"—indeed, ever broader—perspectives.

Twenty years of studies and recommendations have, it appears, brought insufficient improvement in the materials for teaching American history and American society to New York's children. For example, the committee complains, children are often taught about institutions like banks, department stores, and museums that are not necessarily to be found in their own communities. Instead they need "to be exposed to the strength and potential of what does exist in their community, despite obstacles such as drugs and high visibility of crime." Or, the story of the early colonization in the eastern United States has too often been told from the perspective of the colonists; or all nations south of the United States are lumped together, for grades 9 and 10, as "Latin America"; or, again for grades 9 and 10, the syllabus asks them to compare pictures of Greek, Roman, and Oriental art without specifying that "Oriental" means Asian and without specifying which Asians. The treatment of the European colonization of Africa "inadequately addresses the great loss of lives and the eradication of many varieties of traditional culture and knowledge." In the syllabus for grades 7 and 8, there is no effort to connect Toussaint L'Ouverture's defeat of Napoleon in Haiti with the Louisiana Purchase.

Then there is the issue of linguistic "insensitivity." Here the examples abound—some we have already grown accustomed to hearing about and some quite startlingly fresh. The syllabi, declares the report, refer to "slaves" or "the everyday life of a slave" as if "being a slave were one's role or status, similar to that of gardener, cook, or carpenter," whereas to refer instead to " 'enslaved persons' would call forth the essential humanity of those enslaved, helping students to understand from the beginning the true meaning of slavery. . . ." Geographical terms like "Far East" and "Middle East"—*not to mention the term* "America" itself—too much reflect their Western derivation.

The syllabus for grades 9 and 10, we are also told, betrays an unintended but real bias when in discussing Africa it states that 45 percent of the continent consists of desert and so is hostile to human migration, whereas Western Europe is described as having a great diversity of geography and climate and it is mentioned that there people have used technology to reshape their physical environment. "Why," asks the report, "is desert seen as a hostile environment, but not freezing rain and snow?"

To remedy these flaws and myriad others like them, the committee asserts, a revamping of the whole curriculum, with a far sturdier multicultural underpinning, is essential. And given the fact that, like educators everywhere, the committee's members subscribe to the idea that there should be no sharp demarcations between and among academic disciplines, it is not only the teaching of social studies that will be revamped in this process. For general guidance, the group recommends seven organizing "concepts."

First comes the concept "Democracy," for helping the students to assess the gap between democratic ideals and American reality. Second, there is "Diversity," under which students are to be helped to make sense of their place in a multicultural world. Third is "Economics and Social Justice," under which students are to learn the workings of diverse economic systems and the "moral consequences of their own, their neighbors', and the nation's actions." Next "Globalism" will help students recognize "interdependence and world citizenship"; "Ecological Balance" will do roughly ditto; "Ethics and Values" will lead them to the "pursuit of fairness and search for responsibility"; and "The Individual and Society" will enable them to discover the ways individuals and communities become or refuse to become part of the national culture, or are discouraged from doing so.

Beyond the establishment of this curricular agenda, teaching methods are also to be reformed. They are to be "culturally inclusive"; they are to be based on subject matter representing "diversity and unity within and across groups" and treated as "socially constructed and therefore tentative—as is all knowledge"; and they are to be built on the experience and knowledge that students bring to the classroom. "Multicultural perspectives" should infuse the entire curriculum, from prekindergarten through high school, and teaching should "incorporate a range of interactive modes."

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The final section of the report is devoted to guidelines for implementing the committee's material recommendations, large and small, for transforming both content and mind-set in the teaching of social studies. These are what might have been predicted: school boards must make a serious commitment; new curricula must be developed; assessment procedures must be established; and last but not least, funding must be provided.

HERE, then—despite the many efforts to mask naked meaning behind the cardboard language of committee-speak—is a full compendium of the multiculturalists' attitudes and ambitions. What they propose to do can be very simply stated. In the name of being inclusive, they mean to skew the entire educational content of public education to serve—and to serve only—their definition of the needs of three minority groups: blacks, Hispanics, and "Native Americans."*

But the case can be narrowed even further. According to the Task Force on Minorities: Equity and Excellence, there are some 39,000 identifiable "Native Americans" in the state of New York. Double that number would hardly even qualify as a minority. And though few are ever heard to say so, were it not for resentment at the demands for special treatment issued in the name of the black community, the Hispanics would almost certainly be thinking of themselves as no more than among the newest, and hence the least assimilated, of a long line of immigrant groups.

That leaves the blacks, who are, as in the past, the true objects of the exercise. As we have seen, it has from the very beginning been with their problems in mind that the schools have been pushed this way and that, hauled into court, studied and restudied, reformed and re-reformed. The teaching of what the committee euphemistically calls "cultural interdependence"—that is, the doctrine that all cultures are equal—has also been devised with the blacks in mind. Even the dubious, and certainly unproved, notion that studying one's own ancestral ethnic culture leads to enhanced self-esteem which in turn leads to achievement was lifted straight out of the college black-studies departments (later imitated by women).

Out of a committee of 24 accomplished citizens, of whom twelve were university professors, only two found it in their hearts to dissent from the committee's assault on the centrality of American culture: Kenneth T. Jackson of Columbia and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. of the City University of New York. This, despite the far from hidden real agenda of multiculturalism, which is not merely to keep the students focused on the particularities of their own group experience but to teach them how very imperfect from its very earliest beginnings has been the society, and the country, in which they live, and how no ethos is to be preferred to any other. The ideas behind this report might be described as the trickling down to the elementary level of the higher academic corruptions of our day.

Once again, then, little black kids are to be used as ideological cannon fodder. And just as black studies in universities have encouraged anxious, perhaps frightened, black students to back off and take themselves out of the game, multiculturalism is likely to put a lid on the little ones altogether.

For all the damage that has been done to them, black children are not fools. Perhaps more than any other children, they know a hustle when they see one. Tell them they are African, and that African civilization is superior to the one that surrounds them, and they will get your message: they have no American future, they are hopeless, fit for nothing but to swell the mob scene of some Reverend Al Sharpton or other.

This is not a new message, it is an old one, only with each succeeding variation it grows more extreme—concluding with the irony that those who imagine blacks to be genetically inferior and those who style themselves their champions are now holding hands across an ever-narrowing chasm.

In that chasm, getting squeezed from both sides, are the only people who can offer those children, or indeed any troubled children, or indeed any children at all, something of what they need: the people who think them worth a real effort to discipline. To be sure, such an effort in school is not—at least not for an ever-increasing number of these children—going to be sufficient. But it is a necessary minimum. And a central part of that discipline is not only the imposition of order and the enforcement of the demand for self-respecting behavior, but the insistence to these children that, whatever was the case with their ancestors, they are the legitimate heirs of a common culture in which the disparate racial and ethnic groups living here come together as Americans, sharing the same national traditions and speaking the same language, and that this common culture must be the name of their desire. For the last thing America's black children need is a bunch of insensate curriculum-mongers, supported by the ever-complaisant Thomas Sobol and his ilk all across this country, making a virtue of their already desperate alienation.

* For polemical purposes, the "Asians," i.e., Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, have been included. The dishonesty involved in this is breathtaking: if there are any prizes, academic honors, scholarships left after the Asians have walked off with theirs each year, they are strewn among the ostensibly privileged "Europeans" as crumbs from the table. To borrow from Abraham Lincoln's tribute to Grant, would that all the children felt as excluded as they.

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A Woman for All Seasons

Leon R. Kass

One often hears it said, and not only by outsiders, that Judaism is a male-dominated religion that does not properly appreciate its women. The blame for this attitude, say many critics, lies with the Bible itself, which, they allege, is written prejudicially from the male point of view. They point the finger especially at the book of Genesis, which teaches, for example, that the loss of Eden through willful disobedience was the fault of the primal woman, and which attributes the founding of God's new way to the deeds of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—all of them men, all of them looked after directly by God.

One cannot deny that the text centers mainly on the adventures of the males—though this alone proves nothing—but it is simply wrong to say that the Bible does not esteem, appreciate, and honor its women. On the contrary, one could argue that the main burden of the Jewish way, beginning with the stories of the patriarchs, is to elevate—in the eyes of male readers especially—the dignity of family life. To this end, it seeks to redirect male attitudes and ambitions away from wealth and glory and toward the proper rearing of the young for the noble work of transmission and sanctification. Indispensable for this transformation of the natural ways of mankind is an elevation in the status and dignity of woman. A careful reading of Genesis shows this to be a major purpose of the text, and nowhere more clearly than in the second generation, the generation of Isaac, the hero of which is the marvelous figure, Rebekah.

To understand the issues of this story—indeed, to understand the meaning of the entire patriarchal narrative—we need to start further back.* The new way, God's chosen way begun with Abraham, is set against the background, presented in the first eleven chapters of Genesis, of human beings living largely on their own and uninstructed, following their own notions of good and evil. These pre-Abrahamic tales reveal many of the basic elements of human life in all their moral ambiguity, and show the reader the sorts of enduring difficulties with which the new way will have to contend and which it will try to control. Especially relevant for understanding the issues in the family of Isaac and Rebekah is the story of Cain and Abel, itself the final episode in the story of Adam and Eve.

Following expulsion from the Garden, "the man knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain; and she said, 'I have gotten (*kaniti*) a man with the Lord.' And she continued to bear his brother Abel." The world's first—or, perhaps, prototypical—birth, not said to be painful, is an occasion of joy and a source of pride, especially here for the mother. Boasting of her own creative powers, Eve compares herself as creator to God: though the conventional translation of *kaniti ish eth adonai*, "I have gotten a man *with the help of* the Lord," makes Eve seem grateful and even pious, "with the help of" is an interpretive interpolation; in my view, the context favors "I have gotten a man [*equally*] with God"—or, in plain speech, "God created a man, and now so have I." Cain, the pride of his mother's bearing, bears the name of his mother's pride: *kayin*, related to *kaniti*, from a root *kanah*, meaning *to possess*, also perhaps related to *koneh*, meaning to form or shape or make or create. Cain, a being created and possessed by his mother, becomes a proud farmer, the sort of man who lays possessive claim to the earth and who is proud of his ability to bring forth fruit from the earth. In contrast, the birth of Abel, the younger, is uncelebrated by his mother; he is, prophetically, given a name that means "breath-that-vanishes." Abel, introduced only as "his brother Abel," seems an afterthought, important only as Cain's brother.

The pride and preference of the mother and the correlative pride of Cain, the first-born, herald the problem of "brotherhood," which in this case issues in fratricide, when Cain's anger swells from jealousy and wounded vanity in the rejection of his sacrifice. This first and, in my view, therefore prototypical family shows us the threats to peace

Leon R. Kass, Addie Clark Harding Professor at the University of Chicago, is currently the W.H. Brady, Jr. Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. A slightly modified version of the present article was given as a pulpit talk at Congregation Rodfei Zedek, in Chicago, last November.

* I am indebted, for numerous insights, to the remarkable commentary by my friend, Robert Sacks, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Studies, Vol VI), Edwin Mellen Press, 1991.

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and justice that lurk in the most fundamental and natural human associations, threats that the new way begun with Abraham will straightaway seek to address and moderate: (1) the natural pride in parental generative powers; (2) the special pride in the first-born, because he opens the womb, gives proof of our generative powers, and assures us the comfort of descendants against the sting of our mortality; and (3) the rivalry, jealousy, and even murderous hatred between siblings, complicating especially the peaceful transmission of birthright and way of life from one generation to the next—a problem made worse by the fact that the first in birth may not be the first in merit, and may even be defective by reason of his first-born pride.

The difficulty of transmission from one generation to the next is the explicit theme of the story of Noah and his sons, another important reference for understanding the generation of Isaac. Noah, an exemplary man, "righteous and simple in his generations," and begetter of three sons, is fit to be a new founder, a saving remnant out of the corrupt age. After the Flood, God establishes the new beginning through a covenant with Noah, and law is instituted for the first time. But transmitting the law involves more than begetting heirs; generation is not yet perpetuation. Genesis shows immediately the impossibility of relying on merely natural means for perpetuating traditions of restraint and reverence. Ham, Noah's youngest son, looks upon the uncovered nakedness of his father, and traffics in his discovery. He thereby metaphorically destroys his father as a father, without laying a hand on him, by looking upon him only as source of life and overturning his authority as teacher of a *way* of life. Perpetuation of a way of life requires children who, in order to receive, must have respect and even filial piety, and fathers who, in order to transmit, must remain worthy of the respect of their offspring. Noah's drunkenness reveals that parental authority and respectability are precarious; Ham's shamelessness shows that at least some children rebel against parental authority and tradition. The way of life begun with Noah could not be universally transmitted through natural generation alone, not even for one generation.

Genesis does not tell us exactly why there was this disaster of transmission in the household of Noah, but close reading provides a possible clue: the absence of a proper wife and mother, or, better, the absence of proper regard for the wife and mother of Noah's sons. We know the name of Noah and his three sons, Shem, Japheth, and Ham, but we do not know the name of Noah's wife, and she does not figure in the story with the sons. This neglect of the importance of the wife seems to be the uninstructed way of the human race—and this crucial defect is perhaps the first object of God's instruction of the patriarchs, and, through them, of us.* God, in fact, had subtly tried to instruct Noah, but Noah—whether from simple-mindedness or instinctive male chauvinism—missed the point: when the earth dried after the Flood, God told Noah to leave the ark, "thou and thy wife, and thy sons, and thy sons' wives with thee" (8:16), but Noah, changing the instructions, went out, and after him, first his sons, and only then his wife and then his sons' wives with him (8:18). Could Noah's demotion of his wife be related to his inability properly to transmit?

The question of transmission—and the overcoming of the natural obstacles to its success—is the theme of the story of the generation of Isaac and Rebekah. Readers of Genesis are eager to see whether and how the new way, begun with Abraham, will be handed down. For much of the story of Abraham was, in fact, devoted to making things right for the task of perpetuation—the right son, Isaac, miraculously born to the right woman, Sarah, and received by Abraham in a God-fearing-and-revering spirit. We wonder whether these measures were sufficient. Can the new way be perpetuated, especially without succumbing to the evils that afflicted human life in the absence of the new way?

Abraham is educated by his adventures to the task of transmission. After passing God's test in the binding of Isaac, he purchases the cave at Machpelah for a burying ground, which fixes for generations to come a venerable place where the ancestors lie buried. And, in his final deed, he takes the last step toward securing perpetuation: finding a proper wife for Isaac. Making his servant Eliezer swear not to take for Isaac one of the daughters of the Canaanites (descendants of Ham), he sends him away to his own country and to his kindred; but his instructions hint at a possible problem. When Eliezer asks whether, if the woman will not come back with him, he should bring Isaac to the woman, Abraham insists that Isaac not be taken away from home—presumably for fear that he will become lost to the new way, physically and spiritually. A possible weakness in the male chain emphasizes all the more the importance of the woman, who, happily, turns out to be more than equal to the required work. Indeed, I must confess, each time I read these stories, I fall in love with Rebekah—and who doesn't? She is good-looking, pure, and generous; she is kind to strangers and dumb animals, well

* See, for example, the story of Abraham and Sarah in Egypt, in which God intervenes to protect Sarah from Pharaoh's advances and to indicate that Abraham's promised seed must come from the proper woman and wife. Or, again, later, when Sarah demands the banishment of Hagar and Ishmael, God tells the distraught Abraham "in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice" (*shema bekolah*) (21:12). Consider also the parallel stories of the hospitality of Abraham (18) and Lot (19): Sarah is at home and participates with her husband; Mrs. Lot is not present, and Lot seeks to protect his guests from the Sodomites by offering up his daughters.

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beyond the necessary minimum. Energetic, lively, and eager, she courageously and willingly leaves her father's house in Haran, exactly as Abraham had done a generation before, to go to Canaan. She has a mind of her own and knows her own mind, consenting without hesitation to the proposed marriage. When she comes upon her future husband, we see him uncared for, languishing, in the place where Hagar wept; the narrator reports that "he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, camels were coming." But Rebekah too "lifted up her eyes and she saw Isaac, and she alighted from the camel," saying, "who is that man?" On receiving the answer, her energy and perspicacity (both still powerful) hide behind her modesty, as she veils herself to announce in the language of visibility that she willingly "belongs" to him. The text subtly compares her energy and far-sightedness to his immobility and limited vision, her modesty to his need to be comforted for the loss of his mother. From then on, Rebekah exercises her leadership indirectly and from behind the scenes. Just as God led Abraham's servant to the right woman, Rebekah, so Rebekah will lead Isaac to Jacob, the right son.

Our story proper begins by announcing our theme: "These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son; Abraham begat Isaac" (25:19). From this unique and strange formulation—where we expect the names of Isaac's children, we are instead told (twice) that Isaac was Abraham's son—we learn two things: the most salient fact for the generations of Isaac is that he was begotten by Abraham; and the crucial question is, does Isaac transmit and not only sire? For a while, it looked as though he might not even sire, for Rebekah was barren through the first twenty years of their marriage. Only after Isaac entreats God on behalf of his wife does Rebekah become pregnant; unlike Eve, Rebekah, though eager for children, will not regard her progeny as her own handiwork. Indeed, her pregnancy is so difficult that she seeks divine counsel and guidance. God tells her that the path to the future is not yet set; though only one son was expected, an ambiguous challenger and rival is also present in the womb. Rebekah hears the prophecy of struggle between the two future nations and of the eventual preeminence of the younger. Whether with more anticipation or more foreboding, Rebekah—unlike Isaac—comes to parenthood with her eyes on the long-range view, with a concern for the future and not only for the here and now.

The existence of twins in this first generation of perpetuation requires that the new way face the age-old dangers of divided parental loves and sibling rivalry. As the Bible shows us repeatedly, nature is not a reliable ally in the work of transmission: more than one son guarantees rivalry; also, the first-born may not be the right one for the birthright—indeed, as we saw with Cain and Abel, the natural prejudice *in favor* of the first-born often works, through parental pride and favoritism, to ensure that the first-born will turn out to be the wrong one; furthermore, superior *natural* prowess may not be the superiority needed for handing down the way of the God of Abraham. In the present case, the existence of the twins—Esau, the cunning hunter, a man of the field, and Jacob, a simple man, dwelling in tents—reveals also the problem of weakness in the father, who prefers the wrong son and takes little pains to secure the future. "For Isaac loved Esau because he did eat of his hunting, but Rebekah loved Jacob." Isaac's reason for preferring Esau is low, tied to food and self-interest, here and now; Rebekah's love of Jacob is unexplained—but from this silence we can assume it is neither low nor self-interested, and it is perhaps related to the prophecy with a concern for the future. But Rebekah's preference almost certainly rests also on the differences in character between her sons, for she surely sees and knows her boys. The story of the sale of the birthright that follows immediately shows these differences clearly, and, given the context, serves to explain the differences in the parents' loves. Esau, a slave to present appetites, proves his unfitness by the contempt he shows for the birthright; Jacob (unlike that first younger brother, Abel) has the natural gifts to survive and carry on—ambition and striving, cleverness and forethought, and, above all, the recognition of the importance of the birthright, the preeminent place of responsibility in the household.

The problems for this household can be simply put: first, how to replace the order of birth and strength with the order of merit, *without fratricide*. Second, how to do this with the support and blessing of a less-than-right father who, to begin with, foolishly prefers the wrong son. From the point of view of transmitting Abraham's new way, a reversal is needed, but how can it be arranged?

Clever Jacob thinks he knows how to do it all by himself. He devises what is, in a way, a perfect "test." In this test, Esau shows himself perfectly *willing* to change places, thereby confessing to the unfitness that makes such an exchange absolutely necessary. And by devising the test, Jacob shows his greater desire for the birthright and, to this extent, his worthiness of it. But there is something wrong. Jacob believes, mistakenly, that he can resolve the birthright issue without involving his father and that he can do so by his cleverness alone. In both these respects, he is at this point unfit; for how can one be suited to take one's father's place as perpetuator if one ignores the place of one's father? And how can one be a true heir of the way of Abraham if one relies solely on one's own cleverness and strength? In order to become truly ready and fit, Jacob will have to be brought into right relation

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both to his father and to his father's God. And, regarding his brother, he must avoid the problem of killing or being killed by Esau, who—notwithstanding his unforced willingness to swap the birthright—now has reason to feel injured and resentful.

Jacob's shortcomings at this stage are perhaps excusable, for his father had taken no interest in his proper rearing. True, Isaac, thanks to God's help, gets rich and works the land (he is the only successful farmer in Genesis); also, he redigs his father's wells—and some new ones—and reaffirms his father's covenant with Abimelech. He keeps open the life-giving and life-preserving channels begun by his father. But as a transmitter of his father's *way* of life, Isaac falls short; he has an unsatisfactory relation to his sons. He not only prefers the wrong son and for a wrong reason; unlike his own father, he makes no provision for the marriage even of his favorite son, Esau, who, quite on his own, takes two Canaanite wives, wives who "were a bitterness of spirit unto both Isaac and Rebekah." Isaac, dim of sight, has apparently little awareness of what he and he alone can transmit.

Into the breach moves Rebekah. Thanks to her, Isaac is brought into a proper relation to his sons; thanks to her, Jacob is compelled to recognize the need for—and to obtain—the blessings of his father; thanks to her, fratricide is (for the time being) averted; and thanks to her, Jacob is sent off to find a proper wife, on a journey that will also tame his cleverness and bring him at last into a more proper relation to his brother and, even more important, to God.

How does Rebekah do this? In the only way possible, not by force and not by confrontation, but by guile. But not by guile alone. At the same time, she acts with tact, delicacy, and affection; though she arranges his deception, she does whatever she can to preserve and promote the dignity of her husband, whom she serves out of love. By the end, Rebekah's Isaac rises to the work of transmission, and becomes truly the son of Abraham.

Rebekah overhears Isaac sending Esau out to hunt, "and make me savory meats, such as I love, and bring them to me, that I may eat, that my soul may bless thee before I die." Isaac, old and dim of sight, is willing—not altogether unlike Esau in the birthright story—to give a blessing in exchange for a good meal; and he too, like Esau, greatly exaggerates the imminence of his death (Isaac lives for many more years). Rebekah, alert and attentive to everything around her, senses both the danger and the opportunity. As soon as Esau leaves to hunt, she summons Jacob and tells him what she has overheard. In her retelling, she tactfully alters Isaac's words—"Bring me venison and make me savory meats that I may eat and bless thee *before the Lord* before my death." Isaac, speaking to Esau, had forgotten to mention God; Rebekah, reporting her husband's words to Jacob, improves them, placing God's name, so to speak, onto Isaac's tongue—and also into Jacob's mind. (This is, I believe, the first time that the name of God is mentioned in Jacob's presence.) Soon, thanks to Rebekah's successful plotting, Isaac will bespeak his own and God's blessing upon the proper son. But here, even as she embarks on deceiving him, Rebekah tries to enhance Isaac's dignity and Jacob's respect—both for his father and his father's God—by improving upon Isaac's piety, and by sparing him humiliation in the eyes of her son.

REBEKAH has to reckon not only with Isaac's weakness but also with Jacob's cleverness and his penchant for self-reliance. Having gotten his attention with her report, she now pleads for his compliance: "Now you, my son, hearken to my voice [*shema bekoli*] according to that which I command thee" (27:8), and she outlines the plan to get Isaac's blessing bestowed on Jacob. Jacob resists, not because he thinks such deception is wrong but because he fears that it will fail: his father will grope at him and discover that he is not hairy Esau but smooth Jacob; he, Jacob, will be an impostor in Isaac's eyes; and he will earn Isaac's curse and not his blessing. Jacob, shrewd and self-reliant, does not want trouble. More important, perhaps, Jacob knows that he already owns the birthright, and he seems not yet to understand why he needs his father's—and God's—blessings.

Rebekah persists: "Upon me be thy curse, my son, only hearken to my voice [*shema bekoli*] and go take [them] to me." Moved by her earnestness and her self-sacrificing attitude ("upon me be thy curse"), Jacob respectfully submits and heeds his mother's voice. Unlike Isaac, who is dim of sight and a partisan of taste and who will later rely on touch and smell when he should have trusted his hearing, Rebekah holds her son through speech and command, and Jacob, like the true son of the covenant, listens, hearkens to her voice, and obeys. Tradition, passed on through command and story, depends on hearing and hearkening—not on seeing and fending for youself (cf. Ham's relation to Noah). Rebekah overcomes her son's resistance, and brings him closer to the line of his fathers.

The deception of Isaac, cruel though it may seem, turns out to be a blessing in disguise, and, not least, for Isaac himself. Isaac is, to begin with, presented pathetically. When Jacob comes to his father with the meal Rebekah prepared and calls to him, "Father," Isaac answers, "Here am I; who art thou my son?" (*hineni mi atah beni*)—an exchange that echoes, to Isaac's disfavor, the parallel exchange one generation earlier, when Isaac, walking up Mount Moriah, calls "Father," and Abraham answers, "Here I am, my son" (*hineni beni*) (22:7). Unwittingly, Isaac confesses his weakness: he does not know one son from the other.

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True, he becomes suspicious, partly because of Jacob's voice, partly, it seems, when, in answer to a question about how he found food so quickly, Jacob says, "Because the Lord your God caused it to happen for me" (27:20). Jacob's mention of *Adonai*—but note well, as "your God," not "my God" or "our God"—causes Isaac to doubt, for Esau would presumably not speak of God at all. At this critical moment, he calls Jacob near, and groping him, he prefers to trust his deceived sense of touch to his well-functioning sense of hearing. Those who do not hearken must, it seems, learn in other ways.

Indeed, by the end, Isaac is brought to his senses. Remarkably, when he discovers that he has been fooled, he is not angry. He "trembled with an exceedingly great trembling," as if he sensed that the blessing had been given through him to the proper son, by powers beyond his control. As he said at the start, prophetically but unwittingly, *he* would eat but *his soul* would bless—and so it happened. Despite himself, something that was living in him and through him gave the divine blessing to the son for whom it was suited. Jacob now has the birthright with his father's blessing, and Isaac now knows enough to know that it must be so. Rebekah's plan has brought father and son into (partial) alignment, with each other and with the line and way of Abraham.

But all is not yet right. The alignment between Jacob and Isaac is incomplete. And, more urgently, danger still lurks, due to the wrath of Esau. Once again, Rebekah is on the scene and saves the day. She warns Jacob of Esau's murderous intent (remarkably, she divines his purpose, for Esau spoke his plan only "in his heart" [27:41]). She pleads with Jacob to flee to safety with Laban, her brother. Why, she asks, "should I be bereft of you both in one day?," indicating her intent to prevent not only Jacob's death at Esau's hands but also the reverse, and, especially, a *double* fratricide. (Though Rebekah preferred Jacob, she clearly cared for both sons; this is at least a partial answer to those who condemn her for parental favoritism, her only possible defect. A fuller answer would examine whether virtuous motherhood necessarily means loving all children equally, regardless of their lovability.) Yet when Rebekah speaks immediately thereafter with Isaac, she spares him the pain of knowing Esau's plans for revenge. Instead, she expresses to him only her concern for another—and perhaps still greater—danger, namely, that Jacob, like Esau, will take to wife a Canaanite woman. (This danger she shrewdly did not mention to Jacob himself. To each, she speaks fittingly: she omits that portion of the truth that would not be well received and, thus, that would obstruct proper conduct.) Her expression only of concern—she does not offer Isaac her plan and does not suggest to Isaac that Jacob might return to Laban in Haran—moves Isaac to act. Thanks to the way Rebekah presents the matter, Isaac rises to the occasion—and, in so doing, attains his full stature as patriarch. Isaac, at long last, now plays the true father to Jacob, absolutely voluntarily and without the need for deception.

Isaac, on his own initiative, calls, blesses, and, for the first time, *commands* Jacob: "Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Paddan-aram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father; and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother" (28:1-2). Isaac's speech to Jacob echoes Abraham's speech to Eliezer; but whereas Abraham spoke of Paddan-aram (not by name) as the land of *his* kindred, Isaac speaks of it in terms of the house of *Rebekah's* father (and brother). Isaac wishes for his son a wife like his own. Continuing (and these are the last words and the last deed of Isaac in the Bible), Isaac bestows—freely and fully—the proper blessing of the sons of the covenant:

> And God Almighty will bless thee, and make thee fruitful, and muliply thee, that thou mayest be an assembly of peoples; And give thee the blessing of Abraham, to thee, and to thy seed with thee; that thou mayest possess the land of thy sojournings, which God gave unto Abraham. (28:3-4)

Isaac sends Jacob away (28:5) to find a wife, filled with thoughts of God, thoughts of his grandfather Abraham, thoughts of his own descendants and of the divine blessing upon them, and thoughts of the land he will inherit because of the merit of Abraham, the first man who showed that he revered God more than he loved all promise of earthly rewards. Isaac at long last fulfills his mission as patriarch. Despite nature's refusal to cooperate, the chain is unbroken, the birth order is reversed without fratricide, and Jacob, with his father's uncoerced and abundant blessing, is on his way to becoming Israel.*

Who is responsible for all this? The courageous, tactful, and, above all, lovingly prudent Rebekah—who conducts affairs always with circumspection, often behind the scenes, but—thanks to the Bible—in full view of us, its readers. Thanks to Rebekah, the new way survives a most severe test; thanks to Rebekah and the generations of women who, inspired by her example, followed in her footsteps, it survives at least to the present day.

We of the present day, what are we to make of this story and this woman? Many of my students object to Rebekah's use

* Jacob still has a long way to go. His own wanderings, and especially his deceptions by Laban and the troubles that follow, prepare him for a reconciliation with Esau; and, in the famous wrestling match with the man-angel, without guile and through close encounters he loses the name of "supplanter" and wins the name that becomes the name of the nation.

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of deception. Believers in total frankness and empowerment through assertion, they would rather she had confronted her husband and forced him to face his failure to understand his sons and his failure as a father. Others, also believers in frankness and the therapeutic, recommend the equivalent of marriage counseling or family therapy. But are these alternatives really preferable, less cruel or less destructive? Is it really better for intimacy and dignity and love to, as they say, "let it all hang out"? Or does not the judicious yet loving use of guile prove more gentle and less destructive, enabling Isaac to learn for himself, to learn from his own contribution to *this* deception that he has *long* been *self*-deceived—without being lectured or nagged or confronted? Do we not see that Rebekah has not only not damaged his dignity and self-esteem, but has allowed him to find it truly only as a consequence of her deeds and speech?

We have come a long way from the days of Rebekah. And yet, we face her situation afresh in each generation—and today, more so than for many years: how to transmit the way of life directed and sanctified by the God of Abraham, Rebekah, and Jacob, amidst the natural dangers and cultural temptations that stand in the way? Today, the fatal attractions for Jewish fathers (and not for Jewish fathers only) are more prevalent and tempting than venison: money, power, and status; board rooms, country clubs, and ESPN; the Ivy League, the Chicago Bears, and the bottom line; and, alas, for a growing number, alcohol, promiscuity, and even cocaine. These fatal attractions, thanks to our newly found equality, are also open without discrimination to women. What will become of the children of Israel (and, again, of children generally) if women, too, live only for the here and now, if they opt only or mainly for personal self-fulfillment? Whatever might be the case for America or for the world, the way of the Jewish people, now and forever, depends absolutely on the right ordering of the household, devoted wholeheartedly to the noble and sacred task of rearing and perpetuation. For this task—and there is, for Jews, none higher—women, we learn from the Bible, have special access and special gifts, especially if they hearken to the call. As the exemplar of virtuous womanhood—eager for marriage and children; prudent, tactful, and energetically far-sighted; with an ear for the transcendent voice—Rebekah is a woman for all seasons.

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Saving Europe from Itself

Giuseppe Sacco

"WHILE a unified Europe may some time in the next century act as a single power, its initial disarray and disjointed national responses to the crisis in the Persian Gulf again illustrate that 'Europe' does not qualify even as a player on the world stage." This sharp judgment, rendered in the authoritative pages of *Foreign Affairs*, gives a fair idea of how Europe's position in the world after the Gulf crisis is perceived by outsiders, and even by some Europeans themselves. And indeed, Europe's behavior during the war, both singly and as a plurality of different nations, supports the judgment: in this crisis, all organized political cooperation among the twelve nations of the European Community (EC) proved dramatically ineffective.

The inability of the EC to shape even the slightest role for itself was, some said, inevitable; these observers had long espoused the view that the EC member-states, given their divergent aims and ambitions, would *always* take autonomous positions on the world scene. Others, however, had been convinced that a new collective actor, with interests of its own that went beyond those of its constituent parts, should and would assume a place on the international chessboard. Now the two schools of thought have drawn from the events in the Gulf a lesson strictly coherent with their own convictions: the first, that the illusion of a common European stand in world affairs definitively capsized in the Persian Gulf; the second, that the crisis has proved even more urgently the need to join forces.

IF THE record of the European Community was dismal, what about the record of individual European countries?

Germany, to begin with, was at first reluctant to commit itself to a tough position against Saddam Hussein, and even allowed itself to become implicated in Moscow's maneuvers of mediation; only at the very last minute did Germany align itself with the U.S.-led coalition.

Such behavior is not difficult to explain: first in Germany's list of priorities, all through the Gulf crisis, was the aim of not complicating its relations with the USSR at a moment when the Supreme Soviet was discussing the ratification of the "Two-plus-Four" treaty on German reunification. Eventually the treaty was saved, but for Germany, the risk of ending up in a legal limbo had been very serious. And many Germans, unaware of the increasing irritation of the Bush administration with *them*, were rather irritated with the White House for not having taken into consideration the schedule of their Soviet problem in planning Operation Desert Shield.

In other words, as a country without direct or preeminent interests in the Gulf region, but with certain tactical requirements and objects, Germany remained fixed on the classic goals of its own foreign policy, having to do as always with the issues of national unity, the security of its borders, and relations with the Slavic world.

As for Great Britain, which on this occasion positioned itself at the opposite end of the EC spectrum from Germany, its political elite showed a strong instinct in understanding from the very beginning that President Bush was going to carry his initiative to its logical conclusion in a head-on military fight with Iraq. At the same time, in appealing to its European partners to join in support of the U.S., the British government had its eye on the future architecture of *European* security, to which it wished to keep the Americans moored as strongly as possible.

Whatever imperial nostalgia there may have been in sending the Queen's "Desert Rats" east of Suez once more, London did not have aims of its own in the crisis or an autonomous line distinct from that of the U.S. Nor, frankly, did it need to: like Germany, Great Britain has no real interest in the Gulf region, and even if it did, it (again like Germany) lacks the international power and relevance to project influence there or, for that matter, in any of the other regional conflicts which the post-1989 world has inherited from the era of the cold war.

Even France, which was in the Gulf mainly in order to prove that it still is a global power, is preoccupied these days with the "demonstration effect" of that power within the European framework, where it seeks to counterbalance German

GIUSEPPE SACCO, here making his first appearance in COMMENTARY, is professor of international relations and world economic systems at the Free University of Rome and editor of the *European Journal of International Affairs*.

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economic superiority. But there is a difference: France, and to varying degrees the other Mediterranean EC members as well, has permanent interests in the Arab world, and one might therefore have expected the French to exercise diplomatic influence among their Arab friends in favor of the UN-sponsored coalition. Yet the countries of the Maghreb, the Arab neighbors with which France enjoys the closest relationship, were among the very few to express open hostility to the coalition.

In short, if the events in the Gulf have shown just how distant is the goal of a single European foreign policy and a common defense, they have also shown the folly of believing that individual European nations, preoccupied as they are with the balance-of-power situation within the European theater itself, can take up the slack.

WHAT, then, are the causes of Europe's lamentable performance? Here a comparison may prove useful. In the Soviet Union, internal disunity is as serious as, if not indeed more serious than, in the EC. After all, there are no territorial disputes setting Belgians against Dutch, or Spanish against Portuguese; nor have there been armed clashes or reciprocal massacres as between Azerbaidjanis and Armenians, Moldavians and Ukrainians, Russians and Lithuanians. It is also obvious that the long-term evolutionary trend of the EC is the reverse of the USSR. In Western Europe, the issue is how to perfect a union among peoples who until 50 years ago were at each other's throats; in the Soviet Union, the issue is whether or not to dismantle a political entity in which peoples have lived for more than 70 years.

Nevertheless, in spite of its centrifugal tendencies and the risks of fragmentation, the Soviet Union was able to pursue a very active diplomacy during the Gulf crisis. True, in the end its policy was a losing one, but it did create a moment of great uneasiness for President Bush and it reestablished a truth which seemed to have been somewhat forgotten in the new "unipolar" order: that the Soviet Union remains a particularly interested spectator in questions of the Middle East.

One might conclude from this comparison that what Western Europe lacks is a well-attuned *institutional* machinery for the formulation and execution of its foreign-policy aims. The USSR, on this reading, whatever its present degree of decomposition, still is organized enough to have a "line," and even to launch foreign-policy initiatives, while what is missing in Brussels are the technical instruments for the conversion of general political aims into diplomatic action.

Upon closer inspection, however, this explanation is too simple. Apart from the availability or nonavailability of a decision-making mechanism, what has to be taken into consideration is the relationship between domestic and foreign-policy aims. The Europeans are still in a phase of internal soul-searching, while the Soviets, in spite of their domestic difficulties, or rather *because* of their domestic difficulties, know very clearly what they want: namely, to survive. (Moscow's search for a "compromise" in the Persian Gulf war was sparked in some measure by the pro-Iraq feelings widespread in the Muslim republics of the southeastern USSR, the very republics that until now have remained relatively loyal to Moscow, and also by the fear that those feelings, if unaccommodated, might add fuel to the ethnic and national quarrels on the shores of the Baltic and in the gorges of the Caucasus.)

The EC, on the other hand, is still an infant, still taking its first steps. Its objective in the crisis could not go much beyond giving some signal of its existence, and as an objective this was too vague to be translated into a "line." As for the individual nation-states of Western Europe, they have not yet found the courage to confess even to themselves their serious and ever-growing problems of identity, problems whose resolution must logically precede any definition of their interest in issues that do not impinge immediately on them. In fact, the European nation-states have still not faced explicitly the question of their capacity to *be* actors in world politics, although every day they acquire more painful evidence of the unspeakable truth that—taken one by one—they enjoy a very reduced relevance in today's world.

IT IS owing to this painful conflict between their pride and the hard facts that the European countries oscillated between two very different views of the situation created by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, and the ensuing UN condemnation.

At the beginning, they believed that participating in the multinational force in the Gulf would mean buying a rather inexpensive entry ticket to a classic diplomatic exercise of colonial rearrangement from which they might well stand to benefit. The most outspoken adherent of this view was President Ozal of Turkey, who explained that his country had joined the compaign against Saddam Hussein in order to secure a place at the negotiating table, where, he added, Turkey wanted to be "on the list of guests, not on the menu." Other governments were less candid, but all of them dreamed of a return to an era when European countries at least enjoyed the status, if no longer the economic and industrial strength, of "great powers."

Later on, however, all this changed as the Europeans came to understand just how determined the U.S. was to resolve the crisis by military as opposed to diplomatic means. Then there ensued a rush, not always very elegant or dignified, to align with the indisputable leader of the new "unipolar" order, no longer in the hope of carving out a piece of the Middle Eastern pie but out of plain fear of being punished for malingering.

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The behavior of the United States should have been enough to cause Europe to awaken from the dream which it had come to nourish after the so-called "revolution of 1989." In late summer 1990 most European observers still believed that the Soviet "resignation" from superpower status could lead from the bipolar world of the cold war to a multipolar order in which the economic dynamism and the technological sophistication of the Europeans and the Japanese would place them on an equal footing with the United States. After the Gulf War, it is difficult to harbor such illusions. The United States, whatever its own economic difficulties, has reestablished the international hierarchy of power along lines similar to those that emerged from World War II. International "rank" can be attained only by those with the nerve to risk and face military confrontation. Even this, however, has not stopped some Europeans from dreaming.

ROUGHLY speaking, the process of European unification has brought to the fore three different and sometimes contradictory political projects.

The first of these, the idea of Europe simply as a free-trade area, is no dream. It has to a large extent been translated into reality, at least among those West European countries which were forced by the Soviet threat into becoming a bloc. It has also been an authentic success, to the point of bringing about the late arrival of Britain and today even the decision of some Scandinavian countries to apply for membership. The only problem is that since the logic of free trade does not apply to Europe alone, as time goes by it has become harder to understand what constitutes the outer borders of Europe, and why the EC should not also include the ex-satellite countries and Morocco and Turkey as well, or indeed whoever else makes a request for admission.

For those disturbed by the failure of the EC to carve out a role for itself in the Gulf crisis, however, this hardly exhausts the meaning of a united Europe. *Their* project, the second of the three, starts from the perception of Europe as a group of middle-sized powers, or ex-great powers, seriously frustrated in their ambitions and desirous of recovering a degree of influence and standing—of prestige—which they cannot achieve one by one. Some of these people are on the fringe: it is a curious fact that representatives of the most violent nationalisms, the neo-fascists like the *Front National* in France, the MSI in Italy, or the *Republikaner* in Germany, have become, on the surface at least, pro-European union. But beyond these there is a vast spectum of traditionalist forces which, in an era of continent-sized countries like the U.S., the USSR, or China, wish to revive the old ambition of a "place in the sun" through the instrument of a body that will have a say on all world problems.

Altogether different is the third European project, which harks back to the vision of the postwar founding fathers of a united Europe: Adenauer, De Gasperi, Monnet, Spinelli. Its essence consists in a historic and final reconciliation between France and Germany, linking the fate of the two great nations whose rivalry has for centuries engendered endless struggle and terrible bloodshed and has been a calamity for the entire continent, not to say the world. Those who favor European unity in this sense do not have in mind an alliance aimed at joining the total forces of the member-countries. When it comes to international action, a unified Europe would resemble, rather, a collective peace and security system, aiming not at joining but at *balancing* and reciprocally neutralizing the forces of the different nations of the Old Continent, and in the first instance France and Germany.

During the cold war, such a reconciliation, desirable as it was, could not by itself have guaranteed peace, because peace was then threatened not by rivalries among Europeans but rather by Soviet and Communist aggression. Now that the cold war is over and European customs barriers are disappearing, are the demons of the past disappearing as well? Unfortunately, the answer is unclear. The reunification of Germany has altered the balance within the very heart of the EC, bringing back to the surface certain unsavory qualities of nationalism and political rivalry. We might now be witnessing new, or rather old, threats to peace from the interior of Western Europe itself. If so, the Monnet-Spinelli project retains all the importance and urgency it had during World War II.

OF THE three political projects, the first (the market) is not incompatible with the other two, and indeed could even constitute a point of departure for them. But the second and third projects—overcoming frustration through a quest for "rank" or prestige, forging a lasting peace—are not only incompatible, they form different alternatives. They were able to coexist in the European imagination as long as the Soviet threat and the balance of terror pushed the Europeans to seek shelter under the American nuclear umbrella, transformed their quest for national glory into a mere dream, and relegated the Franco-German rivalry to history. Today, when this crucial external constraint no longer exists, Europe is confronted with the choice between a drive for power that will avenge a half-century of irrelevance and dependence, and peace.

For Europeans serious about implementing the latter choice, an instructive historical precedent lies in the example of the United States at its origin. Just as the American colonies, in creating the Union, aimed at founding not only a new country but a new social order, so at the very heart of the Europeanist project lies the hope of creating

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a newly peaceful social order, made possible by the renunciation by France and Germany of their hegemonic ambitions. And just as the American Revolution represented, as it has been said, a "rupture of the political connection with time-worn Europe," so European unification must mean a rupture of the political connection with the war-worn Europe of the past. But above all, what remains relevant to a Europe bent on peace is the old American principle of "nonentanglement."

For the American ex-colonies, nonentanglement meant the refusal of any extra-continental alliance, not only with the former enemy, England, but also with the France of the Bourbons. But of course the world has become much smaller and interdependent since then, and it is unthinkable that even a united Western Europe could confront alone the dangers of chaos and war which come today from the East and the South, dangers different from those of the recent past but no less disturbing. For this reason, one alliance remains fundamental for Europe, and that is its alliance with the United States. Europe must maintain it by giving, in exchange, loyal support—and, when needed, encouragement—to the efforts by the U.S. to meet its responsibilities as guarantor of the international order across the whole of the planet.

But there are many other situations in which Europe can act unentangled, and on its own—not only with regard to the protection of the European civil population (for example, in the case of biological warfare in neighboring zones), but also with regard to the protection of borders and the struggle against illegal immigration; not only with regard to the verification of disarmament agreements, but also with regard to the transfer of military technology; not only with regard to the suppression of the international drug trade, but also with regard to the struggle against terrorism; not only with regard to participation in multinational task forces, but also with regard to the prevention and mediation of conflicts among nationalities in the Balkans or in Central and Eastern Europe—as, most recently, in Yugoslavia. These are not areas that involve "grand politics," the type of politics which jolt the imagination of the masses and lead to global notoriety. But they represent an arena of action where Europe can play an essential role in helping to keep the world at peace.

The most important role the Europeans can play in pursuing this objective, however, is the one embodied in the original Europeanist vision, which remains the best way to avoid a revival of the old nationalist quarrels and to overcome the tragic and murderous past. If the Gulf War finally leads the affluent, spoiled, and sometimes childishly excitable West Europeans to a rediscovery of this vision, it will turn out to have been a blessing in disguise.

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Soldier, Salesman, Swindler, Spy

A Memoir

André A. Aciman

"SO, ARE we or aren't we?" boasted my great-uncle Vili. *"Siamo o non siamo?"*

It was never entirely clear *what* one was or was not, but to everyone in my family, including those who today no longer speak a word of Italian, this elliptical phrase still captures the strutting, daredevil, cocksure, soldier-braggart who had pulled himself out of a trench during the Great War and then, hidden between rows of trees with his rifle strapped tightly to his back, would have mowed down the entire Austro-Hungarian empire had he not run out of bullets. The phrase expressed the hectoring self-confidence of a drill sergeant surrounded by sissies in need of a daily jostling: Are we man enough, or aren't we? Are we going ahead with it, or not? Are we worth our salt, or what? It was his way of whistling in the dark, of shrugging off defeat, of picking up the pieces and declaring victory. It was his way of barging in on fate, of holding out for more—of taking credit for everything, including the unforeseen brilliance of his most hapless schemes. He had pluck. He knew it, and he flaunted it.

Uncle Vili also knew how to convey that intangible though unmistakable feeling that he had lineage—a provenance so ancient and so distinguished that it transcended such petty distinctions as birthplace, nationality, or religion. And with the suggestion of lineage came the suggestion of wealth—if always with the vague hint that this wealth was inconveniently tied up elsewhere, in land, for example, something no one in the family ever had much of except when it came in clay flower pots. But lineage earned him credit. And this is what mattered to him most, for it was how he and all the men in the family made, borrowed, lost, and married into fortunes: on credit.

Lineage came naturally to Vili, not because he had it, or because he mimicked it, or even because he aspired to it. In his case, it was simply the conviction that he was born *better*. He had the imposing bearing of the wealthy, the reluctant smile which immediately sweetens in the company of equals. He was more intolerant of poor posture than of bad taste, of bad taste than of cruelty, and of bad table manners than of bad eating habits. Above all, he detested what he called the "atavisms" by which Jews gave themselves away, especially when impersonating *goyim*. He derided all in-laws and acquaintances who looked "typically Jewish," not because he—Constantinople-born—did not look so himself, or because he hated Jews, but because he knew how much others did. *It is because of Jews like them that they hate Jews like us.* When snubbed by an observant Jew proud of his heritage, Vili's answer trickled down his tongue like the pit of a fruit he had been twiddling about in his mouth for forty years: "Proud of what? Are we or aren't we all peddlers in the end?"

And peddle is what he knew and did best. He even peddled Fascism in Egypt and later, on behalf of the Italians, in Europe as well. Then, when the British began threatening to round up all adult Italian males living in Alexandria, Uncle Vili rummaged through his closets and began hawking old certificates from the rabbinate of Constantinople to remind his friends at the British Consulate that, as a Jew, he could never be considered a threat to British interests. Would he like them to spy on the Italians instead? The British could not have asked for better.

He performed so brilliantly that after the war he was rewarded with a Georgian estate in Surrey, where he lived in lordly penury for the remainder of his days under the assumed name of Dr. H.M. Spingarn. Herbert Michael Spingarn was an Englishman whom Vili had met as a child in Constantinople and who had stirred in him two lifelong passions: the Levantine desire to emulate anything British and the Ottoman contempt for British anything. Uncle Vili, who had given up his distinctly Jewish name for an Anglo-Saxon one, cringed with concealed embarrassment when informed that this fellow Spingarn was himself a Jew. "Yes, I recall something like that," he said vaguely. "We're everywhere, then. Scratch the surface, and you'll find everyone's a Jew."

So jeered this octogenarian Turco-Italian-Anglophile-gentrified-Fascist Jew who had started his professional life peddling Turkish fezzes in

ANDRÉ A. ACIMAN teaches French literature at Princeton. He is currently at work on a memoir about his family, to be published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, of which the present essay will form a part. His article, "Out of Egypt," appeared in our May 1990 issue.

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Vienna and Berlin and was to end it as the sole auctioneer of the deposed King Farouk's property. "The Sotheby's of Egypt; but a peddler nonetheless," he said as we sat one summer afternoon in his English garden overlooking the murky, stagnant waters of what must have once been a splendid lake. "Still, a great people, *these* Jews," he would say in broken English, affecting a tone of detached condescension so purposefully shallow and so clearly aware of its own fatuousness as to suggest that, when it came to his coreligionists, he always meant the opposite of what he said. "After all, Einstein, Schnabel, Proust, Disraeli," he would declaim with a glint in his eyes and a half-suppressed smile, *"Were they or weren't they?"*

He had left Egypt—to which the family had moved from Constantinople in 1910—as a young volunteer with fire in his guts and quicksilver in his eyes. He returned, long after his discharge from the army, a polished rake whose insolent good looks betrayed a history of shady deals and ruthless sieges in the battle of the sexes. Impressed by his conquests, his sisters judged him decidedly masculine, what with the roguish tilt of his fedora, the impatient *come, come now* in his voice, and that patronizing swagger in his way of doing things—never overbearing, but just enough to signal there was more. He had fought in all sorts of battles, on all sorts of sides, with all sorts of weapons. He was a consummate marksman, a remarkable athlete, a shrewd businessman, a relentless womanizer—and yes, decidedly masculine.

"Are we or aren't we?" he would brag after a conquest, or a killing on the stock market, or on suddenly recovering from a hopeless bout with malaria, or when he saw through a shrewd woman, or knocked down a street ruffian, or simply wanted to demonstrate that he was not easily hoodwinked. It meant, did I show them, or didn't I? He would use the phrase after negotiating a difficult transaction: didn't I promise they'd come begging for my price? Or when he had a blackmailer thrown in jail: didn't I warn him not to take me for a pushover? Or when his beloved sister, Aunt Marta, came crying to him hysterically when she had been jilted by yet another fiancé, in which case the phrase meant, any man worthy of the name could have seen it coming! Didn't I warn you? And then, to remind her she was made of stronger stuff than tears, he would sit her on his lap and, holding both her hands in his, would rock her ever so gently, swearing she'd get over her sorrow sooner than she thought, for such was the way with lovesickness, and besides, was she or wasn't she?

Aunt Marta's *crises de mariage,* as they were called, were known to last for hours. Her mother, her three sisters, her five brothers, her sisters- and brothers-in-law would take turns peeking in at her, carrying pieces of ice in a small bowl for her eyes while she lay in the dark with a compress of her own devising. "I'm suffering. If only you knew how I'm suffering," she would groan, in exactly the same words I heard her whisper more than fifty years later in a hospital room in Paris as she lay dying of cancer. Outside, sitting with his other siblings in the crowded living room, Uncle Vili could no longer contain himself. "Enough is enough! What Marta really needs, we all know what it is." "Don't be vulgar now," interrupted his sister Clara, unable to stifle a giggle as she stood at her easel, painting yet another version of Tolstoy's grizzly features. "See? You may not like the truth, but everyone agrees with me," continued Uncle Vili, increased exasperation in his voice. "All these years, and the poor girl still doesn't know a man's fore from his aft."

Their older brother Isaac burst out laughing. "Can you really imagine her with anyone?"

"Enough is enough," snapped their mother, a matriarch nearing her eighties. "We must find her a good Jewish man. Rich, poor, it doesn't matter." "But who, who, who, tell me who?" interrupted Aunt Marta, who just happened to overhear the tail end of the conversation on her way to the bathroom. "It's hopeless. Hopeless. Why did you make me leave Constantinople and come to Egypt, why? It's hot and muggy here, I'm always sweating, and the men are so dreadful."

Uncle Vili stood up, put his hand around her hip and said, "Calm yourself, Marta, and don't worry. We'll find you someone. I promise. Leave it to me."

"But you always say that, always, and you don't ever mean it. And besides, whom *do* we know here?"

This was Vili's long-awaited cue, and he rose to the occasion with the studied nonchalance of a man forced to use the very words he has been dying to say. In this instance they meant, can anyone really doubt that we are well-connected?

This was an oblique reference to Uncle Isaac, who, while studying at the University of Turin, had managed to become very close friends with a fellow student named Fouad, later to become the king of Egypt. Both men spoke Turkish, Italian, German, and some Albanian, and between them had concocted a pidgin tongue, rich in obscenities and *doubles-entendres,* which they called Turkitalbanisch and which they would continue to speak into their old age. It was because Uncle Isaac staked all of his hopes on this undying friendship that he had eventually persuaded his parents and siblings to sell everything in Constantinople and move to Alexandria.

Uncle Vili was fond of boasting that his brother—and, by implication, himself as well—"owned" the king. "He has the king in his breast pocket," he would say, pointing

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to his own breast pocket in which a silver cigarette case bearing the royal seal was permanently lodged. It was the king who introduced Isaac to the man who was to play such a significant role in his sister's life.

Aunt Marta, slightly over forty at the time, was eventually married to this man, a rich Schwabian Jew whom everyone in the family called the Schwab—his real name was Aldo Kohn—and who did little but play golf all day, bridge at night, and in between smoke Turkish cigarettes on which his name and family crest had been meticulously inscribed in gilded filigree. He was a balding, corpulent man whom Marta had turned down years before but who was determined to pursue her and, better yet, without demanding a dowry, which suited everyone. At one of the family gatherings it was arranged to leave the would-be's alone a while, and before Marta knew what the Schwab was about, or even had time to turn around and pull herself away, he had grabbed hold of her wrist and fastened around it a lavish bracelet on the back of which his jeweler had inscribed *M'appari,* after the famous aria from von Flotow's opera *Marta.* Aunt Marta was so flustered she did not realize she had broken into tears, which so moved the poor Schwab that he too started to weep, begging, "Don't say no, don't say no." Arrangements were finally made, and soon enough everyone noticed an unusually serene and restful glow over Aunt Marta's rosy features. "She'll kill him at this rate," snickered the brothers.

The Schwab was a very dapper but quiet man who had once studied classics and whose diffident manner made him the household butt. He seemed spoiled and stupid, a sap, and probably *that way* as well. The brothers had their eyes on him. But the Schwab was no fool. Although he had never worked a day in his life, it was soon discovered that in the space of two years he had trebled his family's fortune on the sugar exchange. When Uncle Vili realized that his incompetent, sniveling, beer-keg of a brother-in-law was a "player," he immediately drew up a list of no-risk ventures for him. But the Schwab was reluctant to invest in stocks because he didn't understand a thing about the market. All he understood was sugar, and maybe horses. "Understand?" responded Uncle Vili. "Why should you understand the stock market? I'm here to do it for you." After all, were they or weren't they all related to each other now?

For weeks the Schwab tolerated his brother-in-law's inducements until, one day, he finally exploded. And he did so in style; borrowing Vili's cherished little phrase which he spun about him like a bodkin to let Vili know that he, the Schwab, known to the rest of the world as Aldo Kohn, was no pushover, either. Uncle Vili was totally trumped. Not only was he *pained*—that was his word for it—by his brother-in-law's mistrust, but there was something unbearably vexing in having been flayed with his own knife. It was a low, unsportsmanlike thing to do: another instance of Ashkenazi duplicity. Uncle Vili practically never spoke to him again.

An exception occurred in 1930, when it became obvious that the family had been cheated of its share in the prosperous 20's. It was at about this time that Uncle Vili suggested they emigrate elsewhere. America? Too many Jews already. England? Too rigid. Australia? Too underdeveloped. Canada? Too cold. South Africa? Too far. It was finally decided that Japan offered ideal prospects for men whose claim to fortune was their exalted, millennial role as itinerant peddlers and master mountebanks.

The Japanese had three advantages: they were hardworking, they were eager to learn, and they had probably never seen Jews before. The brothers picked a city they had never heard of but whose name sounded distantly—and reassuringly—Italian: Nagasaki. "Are you going to peddle baubles and mirrors, too?" asked the Schwab. "No. Cars. Luxury cars." "Which cars?" "Isotta-Fraschini." "Have you ever sold cars before?" He enjoyed ribbing the clannish brothers whenever he could. "No. Not cars. But we've sold everything else. Rugs. Stocks. Antiques. Gold. Black gold. Not to mention advice to businessmen, hope to investors, and sand to the Arabs. And besides, what difference does it make?" asked an exasperated Vili, "Carpets, cars, gold, silver, sisters, it's all the same. I can sell anything."

The Isotta-Fraschini affair started with everyone in the family rushing to invest in both the Middle Eastern and the Japanese distributorship. A Japanese tutor was hired and, on Monday and Thursday afternoons, all five brothers—from Abram, the oldest, who was fifty and not entirely convinced by the venture, to Vili, twenty years younger and its demonic propounder—would sit in the dining room with their notebooks filled with what looked like the most slovenly ink stains. "Poor boys," whispered Aunt Clara to her sister Esther whenever she peeped into the dark, wood-paneled room where tea was being served to the class. "They haven't even mastered Arabic yet, and now these confounded sounds." Everyone was terror-struck. "Raw fish and all that rice every day! Death by constipation it's going to be. What next must we endure?" Their mother was also worried. "We build on bad soil. Always have, always will. God keep us."

Out of spite, no one in the family had ever asked the Schwab to invest a penny in the venture. His punishment would be to witness the clan grow tremendously rich and finally realize, once and for all, who was and who wasn't. Two years later he was approached by his wife and asked to contribute something toward the immediate expenses of the firm. The Schwab, who aside from gambling hated to invest in intangibles, agreed to help by

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buying one of the expensive cars at a discount. The brothers jumped at the idea. It soon emerged that, besides the car given to each of the five brothers, the newly-established Isotta-Fraschini/Asia-Africa Corporation had sold a total of two cars. Three years later, after the business collapsed and the demos were returned to Italy, the only persons in Egypt who could be seen riding Isotta-Fraschinis were the Schwab and King Fouad.

The Isotta-Fraschini debacle set the family back another decade. The clan continued to keep up appearances for a while, and its members were often observed Sundaying in the king's gardens or arriving in chauffeured cars at the Sporting or Sailing Club, but they were flat broke. Too vain to admit defeat, and too prudent to start baiting their creditors, they began tapping second-tier friends and relatives who could be relied on to keep their secret. Even Albert, their other brother-in-law, who in earlier days as a prosperous cigarette manufacturer had supported the father they left behind in Turkey, was asked to contribute something toward family finances. He did so reluctantly and after terrible rows with Esther, his wife, who like her other sisters never doubted that blood was thicker than marriage vows.

Albert had other reasons for neither trusting nor wanting to help them. It was upon the brothers' assurances that he had finally and recklessly liquidated his cigarette business in Turkey and moved to Egypt, hoping both to invest in his in-laws' firm and to spare his eighteen-year-old son the horrors of Turkish barracks life. As soon as he arrived in Alexandria, however, the clan made it quite clear they were not about to let him into their Isotta-Fraschini schemes. Crestfallen, the now-impoverished nicotine merchant had no choice but to take the life savings he had smuggled out of Turkey and become the proprietor of a small pool hall facing the coast road.

He never forgave them this trick. "Come, we'll help you," he would remind his wife, mimicking her brothers' repeated appeals to him. "We'll give you this, we'll give you that. Nothing! My ancestors were important enough to be assassinated by generations of sultans. . . . Now, billiards," he would mutter as he stood outside the kitchen door each morning, waiting for the assortment of cheese and spinach pastries which his wife baked every dawn. They sold well and were much liked by the pool players who enjoyed eating something while drinking their anisette.

Not only had his own circumstances been drastically reduced, but Albert was still expected to help out his wife's family. And so Vili's driver, thoroughly convinced that he was picking up money owed to his employer, would stop outside Albert's pool hall, alight, walk in, receive a wad of bills, and "warn" Albert that he would be back in a week or so. After about the fifth such loan, the humble proprietor of the pool hall walked outside, cue in hand, and rammed it through the car window, informing his brother-in-law who was skulking in the back seat that since he was on such good terms with royalty, he should tap the king for something to "tide him over"—Vili's euphemism for desperate loans.

Esther was horrified when she heard of the confrontation between her brother and her husband. "But he's never done anything like this before," she protested, "he's not violent at all."

"He's a Turk, through and through."

"And what are you then, Italian by any chance?"

"Italian or not Italian, I know better than to break a car window."

"I'll speak to him," she said.

"No, I don't ever want to see him again. He's a terribly ungrateful man. If he weren't your husband, Esther, if he weren't your husband. . .," started Vili.

"If he weren't my husband, he wouldn't have lent you a penny. And if you weren't my brother, we wouldn't be in the mess we are in now."

VILI'S given name was Aaron. When he returned to Alexandria in 1922, four years after the signing of the armistice, he had to make up for lost time. With the help of his brother, he became a rice expert in one week. Then a sugar-cane examiner. In the space of three months he knew how to cure every conceivable disease afflicting cotton, Egypt's prized agricultural product. In half a year's time, he had not only toured every corner of Egypt, but had also visited every cotton magnate's home rumored to house a promising young Jewish wife. He married one slightly over a year after returning from Europe.

Having become a respectable citizen now, Aaron reverted to what he liked best of all: married women. It is said that some of his mistresses were so severely shaken when he was done with them that they would show up at his wife's doorstep, pleading with her to intercede on their behalf, which poor Aunt Lola, whose heart was the biggest organ in her body, would sometimes do.

Seven years after the war, a woman named Lotte turned up at the family's residence with the picture of a man to whom she claimed she had been engaged in Berlin. When the misunderstanding was finally cleared up, and the woman had put her handkerchief back into her pocketbook, she was invited to stay for lunch with the family, most of whose members were due to arrive toward one o'clock. Aaron was the last to show, but as soon as he walked in she immediately recognized his footsteps in the vestibule, stood up, put down her glass of sherry, and ran out screaming "Willy, Willy" at the top of her lungs.

No one had any idea what the demented woman meant by the strange name, but during lunch, when everyone had more or less regained composure, she explained that in 1913 he had looked

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so much like Emperor William in his new Prussian uniform that she could not resist nicknaming him Willy for short. From that day onward his wife found something so endearingly right about "Willy," so stout yet so diminutive, that she too began to call him Vili, first with reproof, then with raillery, and finally by force of habit, until everyone, including his mother, called him Vili, which eventually acquired its diminutive Greco-Judeo-Spanish form: "Vilico."

"Vilico traitor," his mother said afterward.

He protested. "I was really in love with her at the time. And besides, it happened long before I'd met Lola."

"I wasn't talking about women. Traitor you are, traitor you'll always be."

No one had the heart to ship the resurrected Lotte back to Belgium. So she was hired as a secretary by Uncle Abram, then as a sales assistant by Uncle Jacques, who eventually palmed her off on Uncle Isaac, who finally married her. In the family picture taken at their wedding, Tante Lotte is standing next to Uncle Isaac at the top of the stairway, with her right hand resting on Uncle Vili's shoulder. Are we, squints Uncle Vili, or aren't we, after all, men who share, men who exact the highest sacrifices, men whom women worship? Behind the assemblage, peeping furtively from the French windowpanes, are the faces of the maid Zeinab and the cook Ahmed. Zeinab, no older than nineteen at the time, and already in the family for a decade, is smiling mischievously. Ahmed, who was from Khartoum, bashfully attempts to avert his eyes from the photographer, covering his face with his right palm.

WHILE the family was trying to recover from the Isotta-Fraschini debacle, Uncle Vili was busily pursuing an altogether different career: that of a Fascist. He had become such an ardent supporter of the Duce that he made everyone in the family wear a black shirt and follow the Fascist health regimen by exercising daily. A punctilious observer of all changes inflicted on the Italian language by the Fascists, he tried to purge his acquired Anglicisms from his speech, tastes, and clothing; when Italy went to war against Ethiopia, he asked the family to surrender its gold jewelry to the government to help finance the Duce's dream of an empire.

The irony behind Uncle Vili's patriotic histrionics is that, all the while proclaiming his undying allegiance to the Fascio, he had already joined British intelligence. His induction as a spy provided him with the only career for which he was truly suited from birth. It also encouraged everyone else in the family to remain in Egypt, especially now that they were plugged into the affairs of not one but two empires.

Vili's admission to His Majesty's Secret Service coincided with another piece of good fortune for the family: Isaac's flourishing friendship with King Farouk, Fouad's son. It is not clear how Isaac obtained his appointment as director at the Ministry of Finance, but shortly after his wedding, he also found himself sitting on the boards of most major corporations in Egypt. Fraterism, which gives to brothers what nepotism gives to nephews and grandchildren, took care of the rest. Uncles Jacques and Cosimo were offered lucrative posts at two banks in a direct line with the Ministry of Finance. Vili's auction business was thriving, the apartment overlooking the dazzling expanse of beach-water was given a much-needed sprucing up, twins were born to the Schwab and Marta, and Vili finally made up with his brother-in-law Albert.

At first, Uncle Vili tried to conceal the nature of his new career. Only Aunt Lola and his brother Isaac knew of it. But secrets of this kind he could never resist divulging, particularly since they stirred envy and admiration. It was the closest thing to being a soldier again. He carried a pistol wherever he went and, before sitting down to lunch with the rest of the family, could be seen fiddling with and loosening his holster. "What is he," asked the Schwab, "a gangster now?" "Shh," Aunt Marta would hiss, "no one is supposed to know." "But it's so obvious what he's up to, he must be some sort of decoy. The British couldn't possibly be that stupid."

But then wars are won not because one party is more resourceful but because the other is more incompetent. The Italians never suspected that Vili had thrown in his lot with the British and continued to use his services in Egypt and elsewhere. Vili was now very often absent from Alexandria, either in Ethiopia with the Italian army, or in Italy, or serving in various Italian delegations to Germany. To become still more vital to Italian interests, he made a name for himself as a transportation expert and a specialist in fuel distribution for desert convoys. How and where he acquired even the most nodding acquaintance with these fields is beyond conjecture, but the Italians needed anyone they could get. They took advantage of his flourishing auction house to cover his frequent comings and goings between Rome and Alexandria. To allay British scrutiny, they encouraged him to import antique furniture, and thus with the help of the Fascists he managed to purchase priceless antiques in Italy at a fraction of their price only to sell them to Egyptian pashas for a fortune.

He became very wealthy. With time, not only did there accrue to him the many privileges of an English gentleman spy, but his double life allowed him to enact all those elaborate British rituals—from breakfast to nightcap—which he had always secretly envied while gratifying his undying Italian patriotism whenever he heard the Fascist anthem, or when, years later, the Italians—not without German help—finally scored a victory against the Greeks. "We've taken Greece," he

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suddenly shouted one day, hanging up the telephone with what must also have been unsuspected Turkish glee in his voice. "We're finally in Athens!" Whereupon everyone jumped up and down, stirring up the Egyptian servants and maids, who would ululate at the slightest pretext for celebration, until someone inevitably sobered up the festivities by voicing concern for Greek Jewry.

THEN something happened. Even he could not quite understand it. "Things aren't going well," Vili said. When pressed to explain, he would simply say, "Things." Unnerved, his sister Esther would try coaxing him: "Is it that you don't want to say or that you don't know?" "No, I do know." "Then tell us." "It's about Germany." "Anyone could have said it was about Germany. What about Germany?" "They've been nosing around Libya too much. It just doesn't bode well."

A few months later, Aunt Elsa arrived with her husband from Marseilles. "Very bad. Terrible," she said. They would not give her an exit visa. Isaac had had to arrange a diplomatic passport bearing the king's seal.

Hardly a month later, the Schwab's sister Flora appeared in the family living room. Clara, his sister-in-law, immediately saw the writing on the wall. "If all these Ashkenazi Jews begin swarming in from Germany, it's going to be the end for us. We'll be teeming with tailors and brokers all over the city."

"We couldn't sell anything," said Flora. "They took everything. We left with what we could." Flora, who was thirty-two at the time, had come alone with her mother, an ailing, aging woman with clear blue eyes and white skin touched with pink, who spoke French poorly and who seemed to wear a pleading, terrified look on her face. "They slapped her on the streets two months ago, then she got lost in her own neighborhood, now she keeps to herself." For several weeks early that summer, the streets were rife with rumors of an impending, perhaps decisive, battle with the Afrika Korps. Rommel's forces had seized one stronghold after another, working their way along the Libyan coastline. "There's going to be a terrible battle. Then the Germans will invade." Panic struck. The small resort town of Mersah-Metrouh on the coast near the Libyan border had fallen into German hands. "They hate us Jews more than they despise Arabs," said Aunt Elsa, as though this were a most astonishing piece of news. Uncle Isaac, who had heard a lot about German anti-Semitism, had put together a terrifying account, made up of rumors, worst fears, and haunting reminders of the Armenian massacre of 1895, which he had witnessed. "They round them up. First they find out who is Jewish, then they send trucks at night and force all the men into them, and then they take you to distant factories, leaving women and children to starve by themselves." "All you're doing is scaring everyone, so stop it right now," said Esther, who like most members of her family had witnessed at least two Armenian massacres in Turkey. "Yes, but the Armenians had been spying for the British for far too long," protested Vili who, in this case, sympathized with the Turks, even though he had fought on the British side during the Great War, while Albert, who had fought with the Turks against the British, condemned the massacres as barbarous. "The Turks simply had to put a stop to it in the only way they knew how: with blood and more blood. But what have Jews ever done to the Germans?"

"The way some Jews behave," jumped in Aunt Clara, "I'd run them out of this world into the next. It's because of Jews like them that they hate Jews like us," she said, eyeing her brother Vili, one of whose favorite maxims she had just quoted. "Then they're really going to take us away, you think?" interrupted Marta, her voice already quaking. "Don't start now with the crying, please! We're in the middle of a war," said an exasperated Esther. "But it's because we're in the middle of a war that I'm crying," insisted Aunt Marta, "don't you see?" "No, I don't see. If they take us away, then they'll take us away, and that'll be the end of that. . . ."

Weeks before the first battle of El Alamein, the matriarch decided to put into effect an old family expedient. She summoned everyone to stay in her apartment for as long as the situation warranted. None declined the offer; they arrived, like Noah's beasts, in twos and fours, some from Cairo and Port Said, some from as far away as Khartoum. Mattresses were laid out side by side on the floors, extra leaves were added to the dining-room table, and two more cooks were hired, one of whom raised doves in case there was a shortage of food. A sheep and two ewes were secretly brought in under cover of night and tied upstairs in the terrace next to the makeshift coop.

Everyone was already settled in a week after the matriarch's summons. During the day, family members would leave and tend to business. Then all would return for lunch, and during those long summer afternoons, some of the men would sit around the dining-room table naming their worst fears while the children napped and women mended and knitted things in other rooms. Warm clothing was particularly needed; European winters were harsh, they said. At the entrance to the apartment stood a row of very small suitcases neatly stacked in a corner, some dating back to their owners' youth in Turkey and to school days abroad. Now, blotched and tattered by age, bearing yellowed stickers from Europe's grand hotels, they waited meekly in the vestibule for that day when the Nazis would march into Alexandria and

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round up all Jewish men above eighteen, allowing each a small suitcase with bare necessaries.

Later in the afternoon some members of the family would go out, and the women might stop at the Sporting Club. But by teatime most were already home. Dinner was usually light and quick, consisting of bread, jam, fruit, cheese, chocolate, and home-made yogurt, reflecting Aunt Elsa's tight management of family finances, Uncle Vili's Spartan dietary norms, as well as the family's humble origins. After dinner, coffee would be brought in and everyone would crowd into the living room and listen to the radio for hours, some to the BBC, others to the Italian stations. The reports were always confusing.

"All I know is that the Germans need Suez. Therefore, they must attack," Vili maintained.

"Yes, but can we stop them?"

"Only for the short term. Long-term, no. General Alexander may be a genius; but Rommel is Rommel."

"Then what shall we do?" asked Aunt Marta, always ready to break into hysterics.

"There is nothing we can do."

"What do you mean there is nothing we can do? We can escape."

"Escape where?" asked Esther, turning red.

"Escape. I don't know. Escape!"

"But where?" continued her sister. "To Greece? They've already taken Greece. To Turkey? We've just barely gotten out of there. To Italy? They'd run us into jail. To Libya? The Germans and Italians are there already. Don't you see that once they take Suez, it'll all be finished."

"What do you mean 'finished'? So you *do* think that they'll win?"

"Oh, I don't know about that," interjected Vili.

"Just come out and say it. They'll win and then they'll come and take us all away."

Vili did not answer.

"How about Madagascar then?"

"Madagascar! Please, Marta, really!"

"Or South Africa. Or India. What's wrong with just trying to gain time elsewhere. Just keeping one step ahead of them. Maybe they'll lose."

"They won't lose this time," said Abram who rarely spoke on these occasion. "They've learned much too well from their mistakes. No. I'd rather take my chances and see what happens."

"It's easy for you to say. You're already old. But I've got children to think about, *children*," Marta repeated, losing her temper.

"You are all such pessimists," Vili finally said. "It's not written that the Germans have to win, you know. They may lose. Their fuel supplies are terribly low and they have overextended themselves. Let them attack Egypt, let them venture as deep as they want. Sand always wins in the end—remember that," he continued, advocating the strategic restraint of Hannibal's foe, Quintus Fabius Maximus, known to history as Cunctator, the temporizer. "We've survived worse enemies before, we'll outlive this one, too."

"Well said," replied his sister Elsa, who loved positive thinking and who could never bring herself to believe that disaster could be as imminent as all that. "I knew *you* would come up with something in the end," she said, eying her silent husband with that scornful look which all members of her family reserved for their respective spouses during family gatherings.

"As long as we have courage and stand together and don't panic and don't listen to idle rumors floating between seamstress this and hairdresser that, *sisters*," Vili emphasized, "we'll pull through this one as well." He declaimed this in the only style he knew: by borrowing from Churchill and Mussolini.

"So we wait, in other words," concluded Marta.

"So we wait."

And there it was, unmistakably poised in midsentence, hovering in the wings like a pianist cracking his knuckles before making his long-awaited entrance, or an actor clearing his throat as he walks onto the stage. It was ushered in by the confident glint in his eye, the arching of his back, and that all-too-familiar quiver in his voice as it rose and reached the right pitch: ". . . We've waited things out before, we'll wait this one out as well. After all, each of us here is a 4,000-year-old Jew. *Are we or aren't we*?"

The mood in the room livened, and Vili, who had a touch of demagoguery in him, turned to Flora and asked her to play something by Goldberg or Brandenberg, he couldn't remember which.

"You mean Bach," said Flora walking up to the piano.

"Bach, Offenbach, *c'est tout la même chose*, it's all the same. *Todos Lechli*, all of them Ashkenazi," he muttered. Only Esther heard him say that. She immediately turned and uttered a severe shush: "She understands," she hissed, indicating Flora. But Vili was unmoved. "There is only one thing she understands, and all the men in this room know what it is."

Flora did not hear this exchange. She took off her ring, placed it next to the keyboard, and soon began playing something by Chopin. Everyone was overjoyed.

Then came the wonderful news. The British 8th Army had managed to halt Rommel's advance at El Alamein, and in the fall of 1942, finally mounted a decisive attack upon the Afrika Korps. The battle lasted twelve days. At night, the family would stand for hours on the balcony as if for holiday fireworks, straining their eyes west of the city to catch a glimpse of the historic battle that was to decide their fate. Some smoked, others chatted among themselves or with neighbors, while from emptied rooms came the incessant crackle of short-wave bulletins. A dis-

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tant, half-inch halo hovered over the western horizon, swaying in the blackout, suddenly beaming like an approaching vehicle only to fade again, a pale amber moon on a misty night. All they heard was a distant, muffled drone, like the whirr of fans on quiet summer evenings or the sound of a large refrigerator humming in the pantry. People went to sleep to the faraway rumble of battle.

"See? All your fears of being taken away have come to nothing. Didn't I tell you?" said Vili to his sister Marta when it became clear that Britain had scored a decisive victory.

Everyone was readying to leave the old mother's home. Yet the preparations were slow, uncertain, even dilatory, partly because everyone had grown accustomed to the refugee life and was reluctant to abandon its solidarity, but also because no one wanted to tempt fate by proclaiming the danger averted. "What's the hurry? There are still many pigeons left. Besides, one never knows with the Germans. They could be back in a matter of weeks." Packing, however, continued. As a going-away gift, the old mother decided to give each son and daughter a crystal goblet bearing golden fleurs-de-lis. They had been manufactured in their father's glass factory in Turkey. "This is the last time this apartment will ever house so many," explained the old woman.

"The way the world goes, I wouldn't be so sure," said Esther.

Esther was right. The family was to seek refuge in the old matriarch's home on two subsequent occasions: once during the Suez War in 1956 and, before that, in 1948, after Vili had been hunted down by Zionist agents who severely beat him for spying for the British. Two months later he got wind they were on his tracks again and that this time they meant to kill him. He took cover in his mother's home. One day, he took out his good-luck pendulum and on the table placed a cyanide pill he had been keeping ever since the days of El Alamein. The pendulum said no.

Vili was spirited away to Italy, then to England, changed names, converted to Christianity, forswore all previous nationalities. It was only about five years later that he was able to show his face in Egypt for what proved to be the most spectacular business deal in his life as spy, soldier, and swindler: the auctioning of King Farouk's property.

"IT WAS the end of the end," he explained many years later when I paid him a two-day visit in England, "The end of an era, the end of a world. Everything fell apart after that."

By now he was in his early nineties, he liked horses, candies, and dirty jokes, using a fist at the end of a stiffened forearm to illustrate the ribald tales which he liked to tell in the old style: with bawdy gestures and exaggerated pantomime. Wearing old tweeds, Clark boots, an ascot, and a stained cashmere cardigan, he looked the part he had rehearsed all life long: a Victorian gentleman who could not care less what his inferiors thought of either him or his clothes. What made his aristocratic bearing especially convincing was that, on looking at him, one immediately suspected poverty.

He showed me his orchard where nothing good ever grew, the huge lake in need of sprucing up—"But who cares"—the stables with more horses than there was room for, and beyond these, the woods where we could take long walks in the afternoon, a sort of Jane Austen world gone completely wild. "I don't know," he answered when I asked what his woods abutted. "I suppose a neighbor. But then, these English lords, whoever really knows them?"

It was not true. He knew them quite well. In fact, he knew everyone. At the local post office, at the bank, at the pub where he offered me a beer, everyone knew Dr. Spingarn. "Well, hello" and "Cheerio" slipped from his tongue as though he had spoken English from the day he was born. In town one morning, Vili decided to pay a visit to the local antique dealer.

"Good morning, Dr. Spingarn," said the dealer.

"Greetings," he replied and introduced me. "Have you found my Turkish coffee pot yet?"

"Still looking, still looking," chanted the dealer, dusting an old clock.

"It's been nine years," chuckled Vili. "I'm afraid I'll die before you find it."

"No fearing that, Dr. Spingarn. You'll outlive us all, sir."

"They're slower than Arabs and twice as stupid. How on earth did they ever manage to have an empire?" he said as soon as we stepped outside the shop.

Back at home his wife and daughter and married grandson and great-grandchildren were waiting for us. "See this table?" He palmed the huge antique oak dining table on which food was being served. "I paid five pounds for it. And see these chairs?" There were twelve of them. "Seven pounds the lot, with eight more in the attic. And this huge clock here? Guess how much?" "One pound," I guessed. "Wrong! I paid nothing at all for it. It came with the chairs." He burst out laughing as he spread a thick piece of butter on a slice of bread.

"You sound like a typical *parvenu juif,*" jeered his daughter.

"And what else are we if not *des parvenus juifs*?"

After lunch he insisted we have coffee alone together. "*Lui et moi seuls,*" he told the others. "Come," he said, pointing to the kitchen where he proceeded to brew Turkish coffee. "You see, all you need is a little pot like this, preferably made of brass, but aluminum will do. I had this one made in Manchester. By a Greek. But do you

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think our antique dealer is smart enough to figure that out? Never! That's why I go to him every once in a while. As long as he remains stupid and as long as I am lucid enough to know it, then things are well with me. Do you see?" he winked at me, complicity beaming in his eyes. I nodded but missed the point. It occurred to me that I would never have lasted a day in the world of his youth. "*De l'audace, toujours de l'audace,*" he resumed. "You see, in life, it's not only knowing what you want that matters. That's easy. It's knowing *how* to want." I was not sure I understood this, either, but again I nodded. "But I was lucky. I had a good life. Life gives us all a few trump cards when we're born, and then that's it. By the time I was twenty I had already wasted all of mine. Life gave them back to me many times. Not many can claim the same."

WHEN the coffee was ready he took out two demitasses and proceeded to pour, holding the pot precariously high above the saucers and aiming the coffee into them the way good Arab servants did, to allow the brew to cool somewhat as it was being poured. "May God rest his soul, no one made coffee like your grandfather," he said. "A snake, with a cleft tongue, who bubbled like milk when he lost his temper and then cut you to pieces, but still the best brewer of coffee in the world. Come," he indicated the drawing room, as we proceeded through a different passageway. The room was filled with antiques and Persian rugs. On the glistening old parquet sat a band of afternoon sunlight where an overfed cat had fallen asleep, its legs stretched out awkwardly.

"See this smoking jacket?" he said, "Feel it." I leaned over and touched the fabric on the shawl collar. "At least forty years old," he said, looking terribly amused. "Guess whose?" "Your father's," I said. "Don't be stupid," he snapped, practically losing his temper. "My father died eons ago." "One of your brothers'?" "No, no, no." "I don't know then." "I'll give you a hint. Guess who made the cloth? Best fabric in the world." It took me a while. "My father?" I asked. "Right. Woven in the basement of his factory in Ibrahimieh. This jacket belonged to your grandfather Albert."

"He gave it to you?"

"In a manner of speaking, yes."

"On what occasion?"

"After he died, it was Esther gave it to me. Where would you ever find such fine wool nowadays? Feel!" he ordered.

Ever the master salesman, I thought. "Let me explain," he said, his face uncomfortably nearing mine. He looked around to see no one was listening.

"Do you remember *Tante Flora la belle romaine*, as we used to call her?"

It was Flora who had taught me all about the pianist Schnabel, I replied.

"That's right, she studied with Schnabel before the war. During the war, in the days of El Alamein, we all stayed in your great-grandmother's house. You have no idea how crowded it was. Well, one day, in walks this dark-haired, beautiful, but painfully beautiful woman who plays the piano every evening, who smokes cigarettes all the time, who looks a trifle worn but sexier for it, and who flirts with all of us, though you'd swear she didn't know it. In short, we were all madly in love with her. Madly."

"What does that have to do my grandfather?"

"Wait, let me finish! Well, the tension was such—you have to realize that there were at least ten grown men in the house, not to mention the younger men who were just as predatory—that every day we would start quarreling. Over nothing, and over everything. Your grandfather and I quarreled every day. Every day. Then we would make up and play backgammon. And then quarrel again. Do you play backgammon?"

"Poorly."

"I thought so. At any rate, it becomes quite evident that Flora has singled me out. Of course, I make no passes, I have to behave—in my mother's house and all that, and my wife snooping about, you understand, I have to move very slowly. So I finally say to your grandfather: 'Albert, this woman wants me. What should I do?' He says, 'Do you want her?' And I say, 'Don't you?' He does not reply. So I say to him: 'Albert, you've got to help me.' That cunning wretch of your grandfather smiles a while and finally says: 'I'll see.' Everyone else knew—Frau Kohn, your grandmother, Isaac, everyone except me. I found out about them thirty-five years later when Flora came to visit us here and saw me wearing his smoking jacket. She recognized it immediately."

"Yes?" I asked.

"Don't you get it?"

I shook my head.

"It was their secret. She had the jacket made for him as a birthday present. I felt like a complete dolt. The only woman I wanted and never slept with. Being jealous like this after forty years, what a dolt!"

A SMALL incident occurred over dinner. A couple of Gypsies were observed through the dining-room window roaming the grounds. Without hesitating, Vili went into the drawing room, got his gun, and fired two shots in the air, rousing the dogs and the horses. "Have you gone mad?" His daughter jumped up and tried to grab the rifle from his hands. "They could kill you if they wanted to."

"Let them try. Do you think I'm afraid of them? I'd go after every one of them. . . ." And then it came, as a farewell present, a memento of my visit to Surrey, a final concession on his part to one who had come to hear the words spoken from his

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own lips. "Me afraid of them? Me frightened? What do you think? Am I or aren't I?"

That night he came into my room to say farewell. "I insist on *adieu*, because at my age one never knows." He stared at my things, looked over my books, picked one up with something like mock scorn on his face. "Do people still read him?" "More than ever," I replied. "Another Jew," he said. "No, a half-Jew," I said. "No," he said. "When your mother is Jewish you are never half-Jewish."

Perhaps it was the subject, or maybe this was why he had come upstairs to my room, but he asked about his mother. I told him what I could remember. No, there had been no pain. Yes, She was lucid until the very end. Yes, she still laughed and still made those short, lapidary pronouncements that made one squirm like a trampled insect. Yes, she understood she was dying. And so on until I told him that she couldn't see well because she had developed cataracts, and that a light, yellowish film would veil her eyes. I said it in passing, not thinking that cataracts were a particularly serious impairment.

"So she couldn't see then," he said. "She couldn't see," he repeated, trying to scan in the words and the syllables themselves some secret meaning, some purpose behind the cruelty of fate and the vulnerability of old age. "So she couldn't see," he said like someone gripped by a sorrow so powerful that all he can do is repeat words until they finally bring tears.

"You won't understand this," he said, "but I think of her sometimes. Old, lonely, everyone gone, and, now that I think of it, blind, dying practically all by herself in Egypt. And I think of how I could have made things better for her had I not misspent my life trying out all these flimsy schemes of mine. But then that is how life is. Now that I have the house, I haven't got the mother. And yet I wanted this house for her. Sometimes, I think of her simply as mother, the way children do when they need something only mothers have. You would think because I'm old enough to be a great-grandfather that I couldn't possibly think of my mother in those terms. Well, I still do. Strange, isn't it?" He smiled, placed the volume back on my nightstand, and perhaps meaning to surprise me, began quoting in French the long, sinuous prose of the first few sentences.

"Goodnight *Herr Doktor*," he said abruptly.

"Goodnight Dr. Spingarn," I replied. I did not ask how he had come to know this passage from Proust.

HALF an hour later, on my way to the shower, I was stopped by my cousin and his wife. "If you're quiet you won't regret this." They explained that every evening, between ten and eleven o'clock, Vili would listen to the short-wave French-language broadcast from Israel. "It's always the last thing he does. Then he turns off the lights and goes to sleep." "So?" "So you'll see." We waited outside his door until we heard the Israeli national anthem, followed by various signing-off signals. The radio clicked off, then there was the sound of bedsprings yielding under weight, followed by a rustle of sheets, and the band of light went out from under the door. All was quiet for a second. And then I heard it, a faint, reedy, muted buzzing, emanating from within the small room like a vapor of sound working its way out the keyhole, under the door, through the cracks in the lintel, filling the dark silence where we three stood like incense and premonition: an eerie garble of familiar words, murmured to a cadence I too had learned long ago, now whispered as if in stealth and shame.

"He'll deny it if you ask him," said my cousin.

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Killer Bimbos

Richard Grenier

A Hollywood joke of only a few years back ran, "She played the female lead in the *The Sands of Iwo Jima.*" The joke is no longer current; in today's Hollywood, there might well be pressure to have a robust female playing John Wayne's sidekick on Iwo Jima, and it can be assumed that in future Hollywood epics about the recent war in the Persian Gulf women will play a prominent role in combat. Indeed, throughout the 1980's women warriors, women soldiers, women policemen, women detectives, women athletes, and even a woman football coach (Goldie Hawn) became Hollywood fixtures, if not always commercial assets. The wave of manly females is continuing with even greater strength in the 1990's.

Distinctions must be made. Since at least the Romantic period, domineering women have been a male sexual fantasy; conspicuous ornaments of this tradition include Abbé Prévost's *Manon Lescaut,* Prosper Mérimée's (and Georges Bizet's) *Carmen,* and the works of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, extending in the popular culture through Theda Bara's "vamp" (a corruption of "vampire") to the dangerous females of James M. Cain, many adapted to the screen (*Double Indemnity, The Postman Always Rings Twice*). In pre-Hitler Germany, the most notable example was Heinrich Mann's *Der Blaue Engel* ("The Blue Angel"), a brilliant film adaptation of which by Josef von Sternberg made a great star of Marlene Dietrich. Italo Svevo remarked that in his early years, before he wrote *Senilita* and *The Confessions of Zeno,* he had composed a youthful novel whose principal figure was the usual thing, "half woman, half tiger."

A survivor of this earlier tradition is the successful recent French movie *La Femme Nikita,* in which a beautiful but murderous female drug addict is taken in hand and trained by the French intelligence services and, while dressed to the nines and exquisitely made up, is programmed to kill in cold blood the designated enemies of a somewhat intrusive French state. Reclaimed from a life of assassination by the love of a good man, the killer bimbo of *La Femme Nikita* is thus in a distinguished lineage, far anteceding modern feminism.

Today's daring women frequently alternate aspects of the "half woman, half tiger" (a male fantasy) and the female "role model" (a feminist fantasy).* In *V.I. Warshawski,* Kathleen Turner plays a "private eye," a film character one might have thought determined for all time by Humphrey Bogart. In one of the season's big hits, *Silence of the Lambs,* Jodie Foster plays a resolute FBI agent, a role which could have been performed with hardly any changes by Robert Stack. In *Terminator 2: Judgment Day,* Arnold Schwarzenegger is only a robot "sent back from the future" while the most aggressive, warlike, foul-mouthed human being in the film is an actress named Linda Hamilton, who can chin herself at least four or five times—not bad for the young mother of the boy destined to lead mankind in its apocalyptic battle with "the machines" in the year 2029.

Similarly, in Kevin Costner's *Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves,* Maid Marian (Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio) acquires a previously unrecognized virility. On her first encounter with Robin Hood she is dressed in a full suit of armor and, when displeased with Robin, knees him in the groin. In recent times, too, the pop star Madonna has turned herself into a one-woman assertiveness-training program; her film homage to herself, *Truth or Dare*—half production numbers from her *Blond Ambition* tour, half documentary footage of herself as group leader—is a remarkable exhibition of a domineering women at her most swinish.

But the season has also seen major movie entries under another article of the feminist agenda: woman as victim, often compelled to murder her male tormentor. *Mortal Thoughts* (Bruce Willis, Demi Moore, Harvey Keitel, Glenne Headly), is the best of the recent films under this heading, with convincing acting and authentic dialogue. Justifiable homicide is also the theme of *Sleeping With the Enemy,* one of the season's big winners commercially. It has been said that this is not really a "feminist" movie since the husband is not just an abuser but plainly psychotic and a real threat to the life of the character played by Julia Roberts. Still, in television interviews Julia Roberts has told the country that the abuse of women

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Richard Grenier's *"Spike Lee Fever" appeared in last month's issue. He is a columnist for the Washington* Times *and the author of, most recently,* Capturing the Culture: Film, Art, and Politics.

* For reasons that have nothing whatever to do with ideology, the entry of American women into professions largely reserved in the past for men has also been a godsend for hard-pressed scriptwriters as it vastly facilitates one of the thorniest of Hollywood's traditional plot problems: how boy meets girl. Nowadays, they can both be lawyers (Robert Redford and Debra Winger in *Legal Eagles*), both medical interns (Kiefer Sutherland and Julia Roberts in *Flatliners*), or, plausibly enough, both highly paid television people (William Hurt and Holly Hunter in *Broadcast News*).

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as shown in this flimsy film is "the greatest problem facing our society."

BUT the most ambitious, self-important, and doctrinaire of the new feminist movies, and one that combines more than one of the motifs I have described, is *Thelma and Louise*, with Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon in the leading roles. Estimated early on by *Variety* as having only an "outside chance at a success," by its sixth week the film had its prospects upgraded to "good but unspectacular." It has produced a tremendous amount of press commentary; after a *Newsweek* cover story went to Spike Lee's controversial movie *Jungle Fever*, the rival newsweekly *Time*, not to be outdone, gave its cover to *Thelma and Louise*, and for the last few months the newspapers of the land have been awash in debate over the movie's social significance.

There is much to be said in the film's favor. Its acting and dialogue are as accomplished and lively as one is likely these days to find anywhere, and in Ridley Scott it has a first-rate director. Scott's superb, futuristic 1982 movie *Blade Runner*, modestly successful in its theatrical release, has deservedly become a cult classic on the video circuit. (Only now do I recall that some of *Blade Runner*'s females from outer space are real brutes, capable of crushing men to death with their powerful, nutcracker thighs.) Yet for all of Scott's formidable dramatic and visual skills, *Thelma and Louise* is not a director's movie. It is screenwriter Callie Khouri's movie.

A film which ends with the two heroines committing joint suicide rather than return to the unbearable world of male domination, *Thelma and Louise* has been advertised on a level of deceit rare in the history of promotion departments not known for their finicky delicacy. "Somebody said *get a life* . . . so they did," run the ads. "For Thelma and Louise it's Independence Day . . . and though it won't be any picnic . . . there'll be plenty of fireworks . . . because they're celebrating life . . . liberty . . . and a clean getaway." A clean getaway to death, that is. Press notices affirm that Thelma (Geena Davis) and Louise (Susan Sarandon) are "women buddies." This statement is somewhat more truthful, in that the two women are at least friends, but if it means to suggest that their adventures are anything like those of Paul Newman and Robert Redford in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, the archetype of the male "buddy movie," this claim, too, is deceitful.

Our two female "buddies," one a waitress, the other a lower-middle-class housewife, set off by automobile from someplace in Arkansas on what promises to be an innocent weekend. Thelma's husband is a selfish, overbearing swine. Louise's boyfriend, although definitely attached to Louise in his fashion, is surly, inconsiderate, and given to violence. In the parking lot of a roadside honkytonk where they stop on their "getaway" weekend, a Western Lothario attempts to rape Thelma, and Louise shoots him dead. The movie has what Hollywood calls a "back story," clearly suggesting that once upon a time Louise herself was raped in Texas. This not only colors her whole behavior, but seems to justify, as the film develops, hostility and acts of retribution directed toward any and all persons of the male gender.

In this man's world, the two female buddies think they will never get justice in the affair of the parking-lot shooting and decide to flee to Mexico—while avoiding Texas, a state for which Louise has a bottomless loathing. This requires quite a bit of circumnavigation, as all roads from Arkansas to Mexico lead straight through Texas. The choice of Texas as the Loathesome State is interesting in itself, since of all the states in the Union, Texas, in American folklore, surely has the most stridently masculine image.

ON THE road, our women buddies pick up a male hitchhiker, who after having sexual relations with Thelma, the giddy one, steals all their money. Thelma thereupon sticks up a highway convenience store, indulging in a bit of justified armed robbery. When an arrogant highway patrolman stops them for driving 110 miles an hour, they pull a pistol, disarm him, and lock him, now blubbering piteously, in the trunk of his police car. A truck driver the two women encounter several times on the road, always making demeaning sexist remarks and gestures, finally exhausts their patience. They hold him at gunpoint; when he refuses to apologize, they make an ostentatious display of gunhandling, firing a few rounds to scare him out of his wits, also managing to blow up his tanker-truck.

We sense that something wonderful is happening to these two women. They are free now as they could never be free in the world of men. They swagger about in an oddly masculine style: wearing sweaty T-shirts and no makeup, swigging Wild Turkey. Louise swaps her jewelry for gasoline and an old man's straw hat and later, in a deeply symbolic action, throws away her lipstick; Thelma sloshes her armpits at a water pump. Always the more girlish of the two, Thelma marvels that during their trip something has "turned around" in her, and the two swear never to turn back. As the dream of Mexico becomes as impossibility and a fleet of police cars closes in on them, Thelma and Louise take each other by the hand and drive their car off a cliff into what looks like the Grand Canyon. Free at last.

TO JUSTIFY the suicide-pact ending of this film, the novelist Alix Kates Shulman has invoked the stirring battle cry of the Spanish Civil War's *La Pasionaria*: "Better to die on your feet than live on your knees!" For what it is worth, the historical *Pasionaria*, did not die on her feet in the Spanish Civil War, but at its conclusion proceeded to live on her knees for some years in Stalin's Soviet Union. Whether Alix Kates Shulman knows this, I have no idea, and one may in any event be permitted to

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doubt that the condition of women in today's America necessitates quite so drastic a choice. But she is not alone among *Thelma and Louise*'s more breathless women admirers in taking a rather crazed view of the film's final suicide. The New York *Times*'s Janet Maslin, convinced that the men in the film "don't really matter" and are just "figures in the landscape," declared that by the end the two women "arrive at a philosophical clarity that would have been unavailable to them in their prior lives." The film's "bracing ending," she wrote, has a "welcome toughness." Anne Taylor Fleming, a commentator on PBS's *MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour*, spoke of the "sickeningly joyous lurch of revenge" (against men) and the "liberating road to self-destruction."

Examination of the expression "buddy movie" is illuminating. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid have adventures, meet good guys and bad guys, but bear no settled grudge against anyone in particular, certainly not against any class of human being. *Thelma and Louise* is nothing like that. With the exception of one "good" male (Harvey Keitel), the film's Uncle Tom, men are depicted as a uniform class. When they are not actual rapists, they are violent (to women), insulting (to women), surly (to women), charming but treacherous (to women), and in all possible other ways obnoxious (to women). When the tables are turned and our female buddies become the gunslingers, these same men turn cowardly, snivel, and whimper. Nothing, however, will save them from gender guilt.

A curious link joins the aggrieved women of Callie Khouri's *Thelma and Louise* and the aggrieved blacks of Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* and *Jungle Fever*. Both Spike Lee and Callie Khouri seem to be ardent believers in the principle of collective guilt, and both seem to hold an indiscriminate attitude toward retribution. For Spike Lee it seems logical and just that any white who comes to hand should suffer for the sins committed against blacks, And, for Callie Khouri, it seems logical and just that any man be punished for the historic suffering of women.

True, these two spokesmen for aggrieved groups do part company at the end. At the conclusion of her story Callie Khouri is pessimistic, overcome by tragedy. Spike Lee would never accept an outcome like that. But then again, from Callie Khouri's viewpoint, Spike Lee would be not a victim but another male chauvinist oppressor.

Thelma and Louise has the merit of attempting to synthesize two strands in the current wave of movie feminism: woman as victim, and woman as fiercely independent and assertive. Yet in *Thelma and Louise* our two women do not do very well, killing themselves because of the perceived hopelessness of their position. The trouble here might be the fundamentally artificial nature of *Thelma and Louise*'s portentous plot. Are women really so oppressed in our society that the only principled outcome is death? Is the solution for women's problems the slavish imitation of male characteristics? Is the killer bimbo the way ahead?

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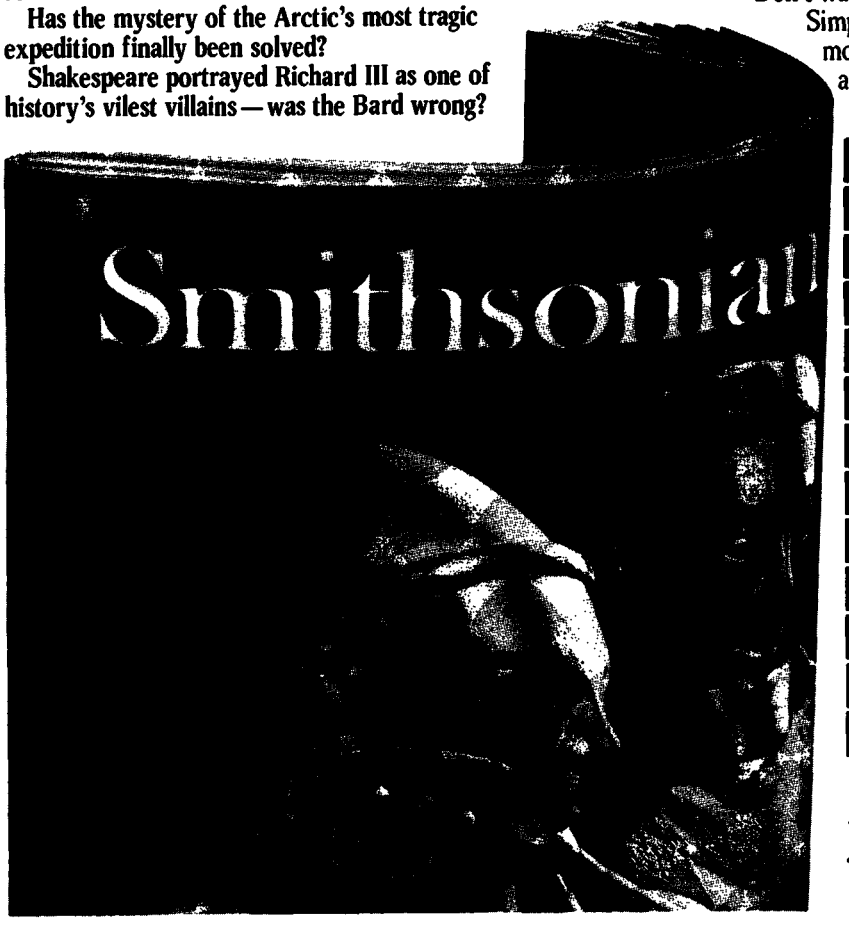

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Advertisements for Himself

CHUTZPAH. By ALAN M. DERSHOWITZ. *Little, Brown. 378 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH R. WISSE

ALAN DERSHOWITZ has raised, or lowered, the practice of law to a Hollywood art. A very successful appellate lawyer with a talent for self-dramatization, he takes on difficult and sensational cases, then writes them up, or rather scripts them, to show how he has rescued the underdog. As Batman serves the cause of justice by standing up alone for the innocent against an indifferent or incompetent establishment, Dershowitz (Bratman) presents himself as a solitary lawyer of courage who is constantly bucking the system in order to keep it honest.

In his latest book, *Chutzpah*, he takes on, *pro bono*, the defense of the biggest client he has had so far, the Jewish people, which is certainly in need of all the help it can get against its prosecutors. Since he is arguing this case before the court of public opinion rather than a court of law, Dershowitz adopts the posture not of a lawyer armed with facts but of a television host armed with his personality. Mixing elements of autobiography, excerpts from his old articles, debates he has participated in, letters he has written and received, with occasional background briefings on such items as Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe, Zionism, the Holocaust, tradition, and modernity, he offers a running commentary on the current condition of the Jews and on what they should do to improve it. The slapdash, first-person prose—more likely taped than written, and almost certainly never carefully rewritten—gives the sense of a breaking story that its author is too harried to treat in greater depth.

The main argument of the book is as follows: Dershowitz grew up, a third-generation American Jew in a religiously observant family in Brooklyn, and from there made his way through Yale Law School to the faculty of Harvard and thence to international renown. Whenever he has encountered anti-Semitism, he has fought it, and the result has been a series of juridical and social advances. So, too, American Jews, following his brave pioneering example, should abandon their characteristic policy of *"sha-shtil"* (keeping quiet), of apologetics and deference to power, and stand up for themselves as proud Jews and proud Americans. Anything short of *chutzpah*, a policy of "boldness and assertiveness, a willingness to demand what is due," not only endangers the Jews as a people, but weakens the fabric of America, a country that expects its citizens to demand fairness and justice for themselves.

Dershowitz's aggressive style seems well suited to combating anti-Semitism, which specializes in all forms of deceit and intimidation. Indignant when he first discovered discrimination as a law student in the 1960's, he remains refreshingly piqued by every new manifestation of bigotry and tries to attack it head-on. Still, while one hesitates to sound like a *"sha-shtil"* Jew, one has to say that in this case Dershowitz does far more to promote himself than to advance the interests of his "client."

Thus he describes the various manifestations of anti-Semitism in the order that *he* encountered them, in terms of their significance to *his* development and *his* career. There is nothing wrong with a little self-dramatization in a worthy cause, as long as one remains in service to that cause. Yet in casting himself as the tough defender of an otherwise cowering people, Dershowitz not only fails to distinguish among the degrees of threat posed to Jews, he ignores those Americans who have gone before and also beyond him in standing up for the rights of the Jews.

THE omission of any mention of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) is particularly striking in a book that promotes the self-assertiveness of Jews in America. For AIPAC was the true pioneer in the use of the democratic process to protect the democratic state of Israel; and in doing so it avoided the two fatal temptations of Jewish politics, to both of which Dershowitz himself succumbs: personal grandstanding on the one hand, cries of victimhood on the other. To this level of boldness Dershowitz has not even begun to ascend.

If he neglects AIPAC, Dershowitz misrepresents the movement for Soviet Jewry, inflating his own very visible but fleeting role at the expense of an extraordinarily sustained and complex political struggle.

In 1977 Dershowitz was invited to help in the defense of Natan Sharansky (then Anatoly Shcharansky) who had been sentenced in the Soviet Union as a spy for the crime of declaring his intention of emigrating to Israel. A natural leader, and one of the most politically astute Jews of our time, Sharansky had been a figurehead of the refuseniks, the "Prisoners of Zion." At some point during his incarceration, he came to be perceived also as having joined forces with other Soviet human-rights activists, uniting his struggle with that of Andrei Sakharov, Ukrainian nationalists, monitors of the 1975 Helsinki Accords, and other dissidents. Although Sharansky himself strenuously differentiated his own position from theirs—he did not want to reform the Soviet Union, he just wanted to get out—the perception of him as part of a larger dissident group created a tactical problem for a movement which operated on the strict principle of

RUTH R. WISSE *is professor of Yiddish literature at McGill University and a frequent contributor to these pages on issues of public policy and the Jews.*

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family reunification and was sensitive to the damage that attacks on the Soviet system *per se* might do to the prospects of Jewish emigration to Israel. This larger tactical policy determined a temporary neglect by the movement of Sharansky, in any event soon righted.

In telling the story of Sharansky, Dershowitz once again turns all the world into his stage. He casts himself as the hero, defender of a victim whom the political establishment was too corrupt to save; in particular, he accuses Israeli authorities of having "disqualified" the imprisoned Sharansky from their protection. This is a pernicious distortion of the truth—and the kind of thing that Sharansky himself, who has yet to utter a single word of complaint about his treatment by his friends in the Soviet Jewry movement, in Israel or elsewhere, would never say. But even a genuine hero like Sharansky, it seems, can be sacrificed when Dershowitz is intent on praising himself.

In this way and others, *Chutzpah*, which advertises itself as a call for a new attitude by and toward American Jews, represents a retreat from ground already painfully won. Dershowitz tacitly admits as much when he goes out of his way to attack the one group among American Jewish intellectuals (as distinct from American Jews as a whole) who could be said to have adopted the politics of self-assertiveness as their own. In terms worthy of the infantile leftism of the *Village Voice* he characterizes these intellectuals, the neoconservatives, as a bunch of wealthier Jews who "look for rationales to vote their pocketbooks." It may be a sufficient response to the vulgarity of the charge to note that Dershowitz is the one raking in the dough.

Among neoconservatives, Dershowitz singles out Norman Podhoretz for attack. In the pages of the magazine of which Podhoretz is the Editor-in-Chief I am inhibited from devoting to this chapter of *Chutzpah* the discussion it deserves. Yet it is impossible to think back from *Chutzpah* to Podhoretz's *Making It* and *Breaking Ranks*, two classics of Jewish and American self-assertiveness, and not be struck by the enormous falling off, not only in the literary and intellectual quality of American Jewish discourse, but in the level of its maturity and nerve. For what Dershowitz proposes, in effect, is to move American Jews politically backward from manhood to adolescence.

What AIPAC, the Soviet Jewry movement, and Jewish neoconservatives have done in common is to assume political responsibility for the Jews. Yet it is precisely where the individual must take account of the political process and join forces with others if he is to effect real improvement that Dershowitz retreats into righteous posturing, often at the expense of the larger cause. Consider again his definition of *chutzpah*: "boldness, assertiveness, a willingness to demand what is due, to defy tradition, to challenge authority, to raise eye-

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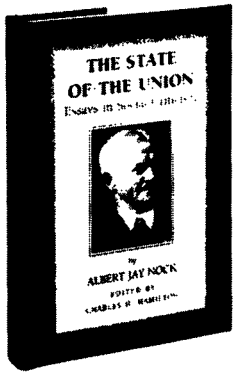

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brows." What is this but the posture of the perpetual adolescent, who would rather sneer at authority than assume it?

Authority for Dershowitz comes in two forms, the traditional Judaism of his home and community, and the Protestant American social establishment; to challenge authority may thus mean to play the non-Jew among Jews, or the Jew among non-Jews, but in either case it is to spurn responsibility for the perpetuation of a tradition or a way of life. The attraction of such an arrested, narcissistic conception of "assertiveness" is obvious and may account for the huge sales of this book. But from the point of view of Jewish dignity and effective action it represents a regression and a loss.

Giving Order to Despair

A HISTORY OF THE ARAB PEOPLES. By ALBERT HOURANI. *Belknap Press/Harvard University Press. 551 pp. $24.95.*

THE JEWS OF ARAB LANDS IN MODERN TIMES. By NORMAN A. STILLMAN. *Jewish Publication Society. 604 pp. $39.95.*

Reviewed by MARTIN KRAMER

THE Arab past is contested ground. When the Arabs were strong and self-confident, no one interpreted it better than they. The Oxford scholar Albert Hourani makes this point obliquely in his new general history by devoting his prologue to a portrait of the great 14th-century historian, Ibn Khaldun. Yet the *Muqaddima* or *Prolegomena* of Ibn Khaldun was arguably the last great study of Arab history to be written in Arabic. As the West gained ascendence, Western scholars began to write histories that were more innovative and disciplined than those written by the Arabs themselves. The Arabs had lost control of their past. In recent years, they have sought to reclaim it through a campaign of denunciation against Western "Orientalists." But nothing will avail, short of the appearance of a new Ibn Khaldun.

In style and sweep, *A History of the Arab Peoples* is a virtuoso performance. Hourani is freer on the smaller canvas of the essay, more fluent in his previous writings on the European understanding of the Arabs than on the Arabs themselves. Still, elegance and erudition remain his hallmark, and both are evident in this book. So, too, is his debt to the wealth of Western scholarship: Hourani has drawn upon its deepest traditions and has carefully distanced himself from the hysterical anti-Orientalism first propagated by Edward Said. (Hourani's reservations are expressed in an essay that lends its title to his new collection, *Islam in European Thought.**)

But *A History of the Arab Peoples* is also an act of reclamation of the utmost subtlety—so subtle, in fact, that it will not always be recognized for what it is. Hourani's genius is that he has insinuated a partisan reading of Arab history into a work that appears to be a broad synthesis of modern scholarship. His history does draw upon this scholarship, but it does so in a manner that is highly selective, even sanitizing. For the specialist, it is a pure delight to watch Hourani fashion consensus where none exists, or evade some controversy with a graceful turn of phrase. But Hourani has written this book, so he avers, for the general reader and beginning student—intellectual tourists who are completely in the hands of their guide. They may rest assured they will see no disagreeable sights. But they stand to miss a great deal of history, and are liable to misconstrue its meaning for the present.

WHAT are Hourani's readers certain to see? Far more sweat than blood, which is to say more society and economy, less politics and war. This preference feeds the narrative with the evidence necessary to sustain the book's thesis. Yes, the book does have a thesis, although the demands of subtlety require that it emerge gradually from within the narrative. (Hence, no introduction or conclusion.) In a word, Hourani maintains that despite endemic political fragmentation, the Arabs emerged from Arabia to forge a unified and self-sufficient society. That society maintained its equilibrium for a millennium, until the unprovoked intrusion of the West.

To make this thesis credible, Hourani must gloss over the political history of the Arabs, which was bedeviled by the problem of succession from the day the Prophet Muhammad died, and which culminated in government by castes of imported military slaves. Only by averting one's eyes from politics to peoples, from state to society, is it possible to characterize Arab history as something other than "a thousand years of jealous autocracy." (The words are those of H.A.R. Gibb, Hourani's predecessor and mentor at Oxford.) The older Orientalist surveys of Arab history avoided the incivility of politics by dwelling upon culture and religion. Hourani achieves the same effect by focusing upon the workings of society at large.

And so Hourani steers his narrative out of the palace gates and into busy urban quarters, villages, and tribal encampments. We are escorted through markets and workshops; we measure the width of the streets. We enter the courtyards of mosques and homes; we pause to admire the gardens and furnishings. We see the pilgrims off to Mecca, and when plague strikes, we number the dead. At several points, the narrative soars upward, to survey the lay of the land, the soil, the weather.

Yet the reader will soon discern a repetitive pattern of omission. Whether the history of the Arabs has been more volatile than that of other peoples, no one can say. But violence has been close to the surface of the Arab experience at all times, not only in politics and war, but in the regulated conduct of social and economic life. A social history is licensed to omit battles and coups. But a social history of the Arabs cannot dodge, say, the slave market and the execution place, any more than a social history of North America can evade

MARTIN KRAMER *is associate director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University.*

* Cambridge University Press (1991).

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the slave market and the witch's stake.

Consider the imperial capital of Baghdad in the Middle Ages, where Hourani's narrative visits palaces, libraries, and surrounding farms, and introduces us to the great philosopher Ghazali. Contemporary accounts also have Baghdad teeming with black and white slaves, eunuchs, and concubines—a brisk trade that filled the markets with human goods from throughout the world. Yet in a brief mention of slaves, Hourani dissembles. Islamic law, he avers,

> laid down that they should be treated with justice and kindness; it was a meritorious act to liberate them. The relationship of master and slave could be a close one, and might continue to exist after the slave was freed: he might marry his master's daughter or conduct his business for him.

Instead of the routine of capture and castration, Hourani conjures up an improbable wedding scene. This evasion misses the opportunity to explore the economics of slavery, the many slave revolts, and the evolution of Islamic slavery over time. (Readers who wish to make up for the omission may turn to Bernard Lewis's *Race and Slavery in the Middle East.**)

Imperial Baghdad, flourishing center of civilization, also had its execution place, near the police headquarters. Consider the execution of the blaspheming mystic Hallaj in 922, as related by an eyewitness:

> A large crowd formed whose numbers were considerable, countless. . . . They cut off one of his hands, then a foot; then the other hand, followed by the other foot. His head was cut off; then his body, in which there was still a trace of life, was hurled to the ground from the flagellation platform. And the trunk was burned.

Such spectacles were central to medieval urban life, in Christendom and Islam. But Hourani omits all mention of public punishment—spectacles of such telling effect that they survive even today in parts of the Arab world. Nor is there much on the role of popular violence, such as urban riots, rural rebellions, and banditry. Without them, the past appears flat—the repetitive movement of merchants, nomads, and armies across undulating expanses of desert and plain. And the *longue durée* in the history of the Arabs seems long indeed, since Hourani will not concede that the Arabs ever entered into decline, even under Ottoman rule.

WE ARE left, then, with those Arabs who tended their gardens and flocks for a thousand years, until the modern armies of Europe intruded by force and sowed chaos. Hourani has a keener eye for the contradictions of the West, and he gives a nuanced account of the paradoxes of its imperialism—its confusion of liberalism and repression, of political trusteeship and economic exploitation. The part dealing with the Middle East in the age of British and French domination is persuasive, for it grows organically from Hourani's own lifelong work on "the culture of nationalism" and "the culture of imperialism."

Yet as the narrative follows the Arabs to political independence, the earlier pattern of omission reappears. The decades since decolonization have been a long train of disappointment and discontent. Usurpation of power by military strongmen, ostentatious wealth surrounded by seas of poverty, routinization of torture, recurrence of rebellions and wars—there is something tragically authentic about these ills. Indeed, they form the continuum of that past which is omitted from the first part of Hourani's book. And once again, they are played down or simply ignored.

In 1982, for example, the Syrian regime of Hafez al-Assad crushed a revolt of the Muslim Brethren in the city of Hama by pummeling a large part of it to rubble, at a cost of thousands of lives. The journalist Thomas Friedman visited the site, and was so taken by the magnitude of the destruction that he made it an anchor of his own book, coining the phrase "Hama rules" to describe the ruthlessness of domestic politics as played by the Arabs. Hourani does not even mention the carnage of Hama, although he does not fail to give an account of Israel's invasion of Lebanon that very same year, and the Phalangist "massacre of Palestinians on a large scale at the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla." By Hourani's own standard of measurement, Hama would qualify as massacre on a massive scale, and its exclusion summarizes the limits of his vision.

The title of the last section, "A Disturbance of the Spirits (since 1967)," is misleading on every count. "Disturbance" is a euphemism (strangely evocative of imperialist usage) that fails to convey the depth of the crisis that grips the Arabs. It has not only crushed many spirits, but has broken many bodies. And it dates from the very restoration of the Arabs to independence, not from their defeat in the Six-Day War with Israel in June 1967. In all that concerns the raw present, one senses that this is a book written at a gaping intellectual distance from its subject matter. "No more than other observers did I anticipate that the 1980's would be a period of what is loosely called 'the resurgence of Islam,'" admits Hourani in his new book of essays. Nor does Hourani open a way to comprehend the shuddering violence that has descended upon the Arabs in the 1990's, although his book will be read most widely for just that purpose. Oddly, there is more of a premonition of Kuwait in the 14th-century Ibn Khaldun. But his life was churned by the history he wrote, his historical sense sharpened by trying experience in Arab capitals and courts. He was rather hard on the Arabs, and his views would not have been regarded as correct at Oxford.

BAGHDAD again, this time on a June evening in 1941. British troops stand on the outskirts of the city, having just routed the forces of the pro-Axis regime that had seized power in the Iraqi capital some months earlier. The Jews of

* Oxford University Press (1990); reviewed by David Pryce-Jones in the July 1991 COMMENTARY.

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Baghdad are jubilant at their impending redemption, but the British delay their entry into the city. The procrastination proves disastrous: over the evening and the next day, a full-scale pogrom unfolds, claiming the lives of 179 Jews. Only later is order restored, in part by the introduction of Kurdish troops. In retrospect, the Baghdad killings signaled the beginning of the end for the Jews of Arab lands. Within a generation, the most ancient Jewish communities of the world were swept away by a wave of Arab nationalism.

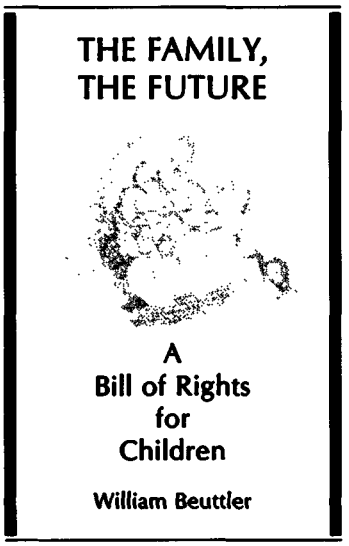
Norman A. Stillman, professor of history and Arabic at the State University of New York at Binghamton, has chosen to present this history largely through contemporary documents. *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* is comprised of a dispassionate interpretation, followed by over 150 documents drawn from a wide variety of Jewish, Arab, and Western sources. The selection is judicious, the translations are impeccable. The narrative and the documentation tell a grim story of the impact of imperialism and nationalism on a traditional order.

As Stillman demonstrates, it was not Zionism that first eroded the position of the Jewish communities in Arab lands. A more general decline undercut the old regime of tolerance. Jews then seized upon the promise of emancipation offered by imperialism, first in North Africa, then in Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, and they briefly prospered. Only later did Zionism sharpen the confrontation, providing the mob with motive. Many of Stillman's documents are solemn official reports of pogroms—in Baghdad, Aden, Tripoli. There were once 800,000 Jews throughout the Arab world; after their flight, fewer than 16,000 remain.

Yet Stillman's selection tells much more. There are documents that bear witness to the conflict between traditional leaders and secularized new classes, to the effects of deracination (including conversion to other faiths), and to the record of Jewish achievement. One striking document, a newspaper article written by a Syrian journalist in 1939, laments the superior performance of Jewish students of the *Alliance Israélite* school in the general Arabic examinations:

> Is this not astounding—the Jewish students excelling in the Arabic language more than the Arab students? ! ! O how strange! The Jews' children excel in Arabic above its own sons. What a humiliation it must be for these Arab students. What a source of heartache it must be for you, dear readers.

THE Arabs have repossessed Arabic, by chasing all others from their midst. And they have bought back pieces of their artistic and literary legacy on the auction blocks of London and Paris. But their history cannot be reclaimed by force or money. It cannot be loaded on trucks, like the historical treasures of Kuwait's National Museum, and carted off to Baghdad. Until it can be written and published freely in Arab lands, it will be told most persuasively in other languages and other places—in handsomely jacketed books like these, whose smooth pages give some semblance of order to despair.



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Black (& Red) Comedy

RED LOVE. A NOVEL. By DAVID EVANIER. *Scribners. 340 pp. $19.95.*

Reviewed by ARCH PUDDINGTON

THE case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg has been the subject of novels, plays, movies, and docudramas, not to mention numerous scholarly studies and an even greater body of polemical works. While the most serious investigations have made an overwhelming case for Julius Rosenberg's guilt as a Soviet spy, fictional appraisals have almost always assumed the couple's innocence, or at the very least portrayed the Rosenbergs as idealists victimized by McCarthyism. Such artistic depictions have been suffused with moral outrage and a damp and thoroughly bogus sentimentalism: Julius and Ethel are regularly seen as loving parents, champions of peace, advocates of racial equality; their persecutors as unprincipled, pitiless men whose hounding of the couple was orchestrated by unseen, sinister forces.

What concerns the novelist David Evanier is less the Rosenbergs' guilt or innocence—he assumes they were traitors—than their image as martyrs. His goal in this wild, irreverent book is to demolish the essential myth of the Rosenbergs as a couple who died upholding the highest principles of patriotic American dissent. Where their apologists have beatified them (and their critics often demonized them), Evanier treats the Rosenbergs as pathetic and self-deluded people who in the end sacrificed themselves for an absurd cause and for one of history's greatest criminals.

Evanier, the author of a first-rate collection of stories, *The One-Star Jew*, has written the first anti-Communist black comedy. The main personalities in the real-life Rosenberg drama—Harry Gold, Morton Sobell, David Greenglass, Roy Cohn, Judge Irving Kaufman—appear here in thinly fictionalized guise like characters from one of Woody Allen's early films, as does a ragtag collection of Communist-party apparatchiks, former party members turned professional anti-Communists, FBI agents, black radicals, and a few right-wing bigots for good measure.

There is, for instance, Strugin, the hack party intellectual (patterned, perhaps, on the historian Herbert Aptheker), who tells the narrator that in the Soviet Union his thinning hair will grow back "as a matter of course." There is Maury Ballinzweig, patterned after Morton Sobell, the man convicted along with the Rosenbergs but spared the death penalty, who confides in the narrator how proud he is that his mother refused to identify a man who mugged her because he was black. There is Solly Rubell, patterned after Julius Rosenberg (the character based on Ethel is called Dolly Rubell), waxing sentimental over the fact that in the Soviet Union "Yiddish was spoken everywhere by many workers and by many soldiers in the Red Army as well." There is Jerry Burns, whose profession is to testify against his former comrades, slipping away from his hotel to perform as a vaudeville comic to the delight of Senator Joseph McCarthy, the most unexpected of guests. And there are the tattered loyalists of the cause who, years later, having sifted through thousands of Freedom of Information Act files without uncovering evidence of the couple's innocence, demand: "*Give us the right pages!*"

THIS is, then, a work of considerable imagination and no little humor. But the humor coexists with more sober sections in which the essence of the Communist experience is conveyed through the tragic experiences of individual party members. Evanier, who demonstrates a historian's familiarity with the Rosenberg case and with the radical milieu of the period, has immersed himself in the atmosphere of the American Communist community, with its cynical intellectuals, disillusioned renegades, picket-line fanatics, and especially its veteran loyalists, old men and women desperate to believe in something: if not Stalin, then Castro, the Black Panthers, Jack Henry Abbott.

In Sid Smorg, a character based on Harry Gold and one of the most vividly portrayed figures in *Red Love*, we see the classic case of a man drawn to espionage through sexual frustration and a desperate need to be appreciated by the more successful. For another character, Sammy Kuznekow, a career in the party leads to the Spanish Civil War, an experience which destroys all illusions about the Communist movement. An even more depressing fate awaits Antonio Carelli, a young Communist from Buffalo, who, together with his father, a devoted Communist and opponent of Mussolini, is granted political asylum by the Soviet Union only to be swallowed up by the gulag.

For Evanier, Communism's great crime is the damage it did to the honest but innocent believers who in the end were inevitably betrayed. In *Red Love*, idealists like Sammy Kuznekow watch their comrades dispatched to slaughter while back home, Communists like the Rubell/Rosenbergs blather on about racial justice in the Soviet Union and Stalin's commitment to a Jewish homeland. Antonio Carelli, after his return from the gulag, is told by an old party sympathizer, a man whose daughter Carelli once coveted, that he, too, has lost faith in the Soviet Union. "But at least now we have Cuba," he confides in the stunned Carelli, and he drags this hapless victim of Stalin to a poetry reading by his granddaughter, just returned from a stint in the sugar-cane fields as a member of the Venceremos Brigade. As the elderly Communists in attendance howl with appreciation, Prim Rosenbaum serves up a mindless rap on the splendors of Cuban Communism ("We prayed in the sun in front of the healthiest cows I'd ever seen") and the unrelieved evil of life back home:

> Nagasaki is a Birmingham church, *call it* . . . Nagasaki is a Manhattan welfare hotel, *call it* . . . Nagasaki is a drunken man in the street, call it . . . *call it*,

---

ARCH PUDDINGTON *works for Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty in New York. He is the author of* Failed Utopias *(ICS Press).*

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you better push it, pull it, grab it, you better call it, call it, *peace, y'all.*

Much has been written recently about the influence exerted by the Communist movement on the political radicalism of the 60's and 70's. Yet here, in a few witty (if depressing) paragraphs, Evanier has succeeded in illuminating the pernicious essence of the relationship between the despised Communist party and the supposedly more independent-minded New Left. It is because of moments like this that *Red Love* ranks as an important literary account of what the Czech writer Josef Skvorecky has termed "the most influential mythology of our strange century."

Suing for Profit

THE LITIGATION EXPLOSION: WHAT HAPPENED WHEN AMERICA UNLEASHED THE LAWSUIT. By WALTER K. OLSON. *Truman Talley Books/Dutton. 388 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by TERRY EASTLAND

"NOTHING could be more understandable," writes Walter K. Olson, "than the urge to escape from today's legal culture." Unfortunately, he points out, that legal culture "is well fortified against escape attempts." *The Litigation Explosion* is a comprehensive but jargon-free and indeed sprightly account of how the lawsuit in America (as in no other country) has become so fashionable and, alas, so imprisoning for so many.

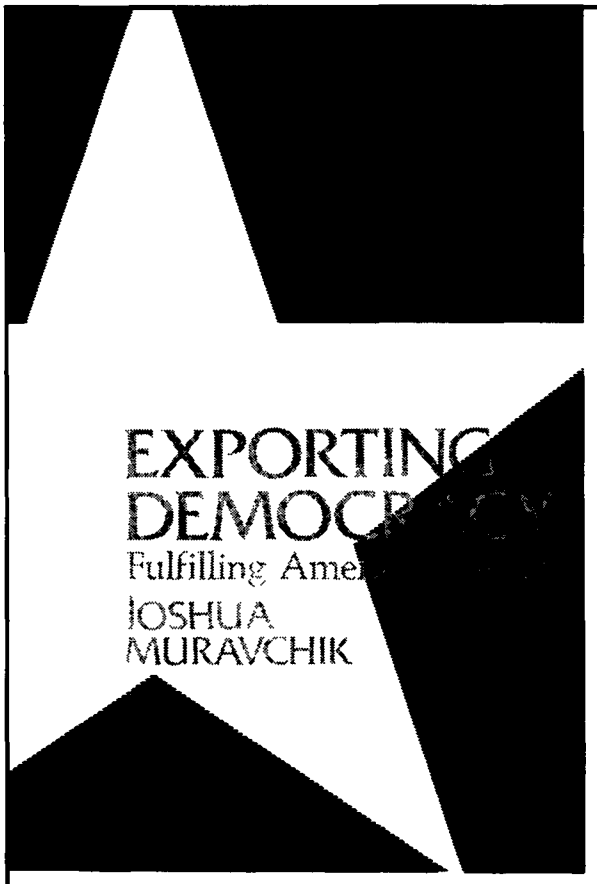
The depressing story has intellectual roots early in this century, which Olson usefully examines. But he mainly focuses on events over the past 25 years, during which, as he puts it, "America has deregulated the business of litigation," at great cost both to individuals and to the common good, though not to lawyers, some of whom have become very rich. Olson, who prescribes a way out of the current mess, may be too confident that the litigation explosion can be quickly reversed. Yet there can be no doubt that ours would be a better society if litigation were once again to become, as he says in the book's final sentence, "an exception, a last resort, a necessary evil at the margins of our common life."

Those, of course, were the terms in which the common law traditionally regarded litigation. Under the old system, ethical rules operated to discourage lawyers from "stirring up litigation." The rules of legal procedure narrowed and focused disputes within close limits. And the law itself, both as written and interpreted, supplied cut-and-dried rules that worked to head off lawsuits.

All of that has changed. Consider, for example, that the bans on legal advertising (and solicitation) no longer exist. " 'Sue for money and benefits,' " Olson reports one ad as imploring, " 'if you have job-related headaches, stomachaches, or poor sleep.' " This change occurred as prohibitions against advertising in other fields fell, too, but as Olson points out, no one really asked whether the law was truly analogous to, for example, optometry. Nor did anyone ask whether society would be better off having "more" legal services. On the contrary, in a 1977 Supreme Court opinion upholding as constitutional a lawyer's right to advertise, Justice Harry Blackmun deplored the "underutilization" of lawyers. And what the Court made merely permissible immediately became the right thing to do; even legal ethicists came to speak approvingly of a "professional responsibility to chase ambulances."

Another change concerns once-forbidden contingency fees, now a key means of financing (and therefore encouraging) lawsuits. Only in America is the contingency fee lawful, and Olson argues that our difference on this score is related to a more general exception: we are the only major country that does not let the winner of a lawsuit

TERRY EASTLAND *is a resident fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.*



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collect legal fees from the loser. Our rule, which positively invites litigation, led the legal industry to look to the only possible source of financing lawsuits (unless the client is independently wealthy)—namely, the recovery itself. By the 1960's every state had come to legalize contingency fees, which of course were available only to plaintiffs' lawyers. It is no coincidence that the richest lawyers in America make their fortunes through such fees, which amount to a third to a half of the recovery.

The new sue-for-profit industry, as Olson calls it, sought moral legitimacy in the argument that the more private quarrels society has, the more it benefits. In time the individual client almost dropped from sight, replaced by a faceless class, and in truth simply by some "private attorney general," the plaintiff's lawyer, who could serve the general public by frisking any and every possible defendant. Olson tells the story of Minda Satterwhite, a Texan who lost her individual claim of unfair treatment against her employer, a city government, but was nonetheless allowed to pursue an identical claim on behalf of a class of workers. A dissenting judge wryly observed that the court had given in to the notion that "a class belongs to no one so much as the plaintiff's lawyer."

Perhaps the most insightful part of *The Litigation Explosion* is Olson's treatment of legal indeterminacy. For decades now, intellectual movements in the law schools have encouraged a kind of subjective vagueness in constitutional as well as civil law, and this has helped detonate litigation explosions in both areas. As Olson point out, the trouble with subjective law is that it keeps everyone guessing about the outcome—and therefore more and more inclined to litigate, especially since "expert" witnesses have become part of the game and courts often are willing to admit low-grade evidence. Limitations on damages meanwhile have been so eroded that no awards seem too outlandish, not even for so-called "hedonic damages"—the lost value of a victim's "enjoyment of life." Courts vary, to be sure, and so do the damages awarded, yet there is no standard of justice by which to measure the wildly disparate results. In addition, punitive damages—those that teach a "lesson"—may be piled on top, to the enrichment of plaintiffs and their enterprising lawyers.

How do we stop and reverse the litigation explosion? Olson applauds recent Supreme Court decisions that suggest a willingness to limit the many forums in which plaintiffs' lawyers shop their cases, but reliance on the Court for comprehensive reform is misplaced, because the problem is only partly correctable through case law. Similarly, Olson urges statutory reform of discovery—the pre-trial procedures that allow the parties to force disclosure of facts—but Chief Justice William Rehnquist's proposal to do away with discovery entirely in federal cases with stakes below $50,000 has gone nowhere. The litigation lobby—i.e., America's trial lawyers—has successfully held its ground.

Olson's most important suggestion is to do away with the "American rule" whereby each side pays its own litigation costs, regardless of the outcome. If we were to adopt instead the English rule, followed worldwide, the costs would be paid by the loser, whether plaintiff or defendant. As Olson points out, under such a regime of full "fee-shifting" the contingency fee might not survive in its current form. In such a regime there might also be new incentives for more certainty in the law. There can be little doubt that fee-shifting would, as he argues, deter lawyers "from using compulsory process to harm fellow citizens."

ASSERTING one's rights has become a deeply ingrained American habit. For this reason—not to mention the practical one of the lawsuit-loving plaintiffs' bar—the litigation habit may be very hard to break. Still, that is no reason not to try. Olson's book comes at a politically opportune time. The Bush administration is considering proposals that would call for fee-shifting in certain contexts, and it may advocate an end to punitive damages as well as reforms that would limit discovery. The law can be a powerful teacher, and with better law, the nation, its trial lawyers included, just might come to a more sensible understanding of litigation.

Retailoring Women's Lib

FEMINISM WITHOUT ILLUSIONS: A CRITIQUE OF INDIVIDUALISM. By ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE. *University of North Carolina Press. 347 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by CHARLOTTE ALLEN

ELIZABETH FOX-GENOVESE, founder and director of the women's-studies program at Emory University and author of an award-winning study of women in the antebellum South, *Within the Plantation Household,* may seem the very model of a politically-correct scholar. But in her new collection of essays she displays a profound dismay at the pulpy fruits of the "liberation" movements, including women's liberation, that budded from the genial liberalism of the 1960's but quickly fleshed out to the radical illiberalism of this generation. Declaring herself "temperamentally and culturally conservative," Fox-Genovese asserts in her first chapter that feminism has played an "ambiguous and sometimes destructive role" in helping to corrode the social order over the past 25 years. "The implementation of women's rights," she contends, "has whittled away at the remaining bastions of corporatism and community—notably the family—even as women, released to the dubious mercies of the public sphere, require new forms of protection from the state."

It would be a mistake, however, to read Fox-Genovese as a convert, say, from the National Organization for Women to Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum. Quite the contrary. She scorns conservatives for their "nostalgia" for a past that strikes her as irretrievable, and the first essay in this book, "Beyond Sisterhood," is a pastiche of clichés

CHARLOTTE ALLEN, *whose review of Robert Bly's* Iron John *appeared in our May issue, is a contributing editor at* Insight *magazine.*

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right out of a 1972 consciousness-raising session. (Before the dawn of mid-century feminism, women were "stifled," they were not "free to rage," they could not "function as whole human beings in the large world," etc.) Nor is Fox-Genovese a neoconservative, for whom liberal reforms jogged along pretty well until some point in the late 1960's when things went violently awry. This book, written in prose that is occasionally striking but too often reads like the term papers of the dutiful "A" student Fox-Genovese says she was during her years of male-dominated graduate school, shows a deep and never-resolved ambivalence toward its subject matter.

TO FIGURE out what Fox-Genovese is trying to get at, the reader must follow her genealogy of feminism, whose roots she traces, with an implicit nod to Max Weber, to the 18th-century Age of Reason, when for the first time governmental arrangements came to be viewed not as organic developments reflecting the communal organization of society but as contracts among freely consenting individuals. Like most children of modernity, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese is both exhilarated and distressed at what ensued once people were liberated from what they considered the dead hand of the past: boundless economic and intellectual opportunity but also atomization, alienation, and the radical disjunction of home and workplace. The new dispensation gave people—including, latterly, women—"rights" for the first time, but it also pitted them against one another in naked competition unmediated by traditional institutions of family, guild, or charity.

This is Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's dilemma. On the one hand, she sees enlightenment, education, liberty, power—are these not good things? On the other hand, she sees the social disorder, mild for the comfortable middle-class, intense for the poor, that has come with the disruption of family life which has been an inevitable by-product of universal liberation. For women, traditional domestic life may have been oppressive—"brutalization" and "servitude" are two words Eliz-

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Loan Guarantees for Settlement of Soviet Jews

Should the U.S. Play a Role in this Humanitarian Enterprise?

Only a few months ago, the world was able to watch the thrilling spectacle of the airlift of 15,000 Ethiopian Jews to Israel. But the rescue of the Ethiopians, heartening and important though it is, is really only a "sideshow" in the ongoing saga of this ingathering. The greatest challenge facing the Jewish state today, almost even more daunting than the implacable hostility surrounding Israel and the ever-present military challenge, is the ingathering of the Soviet Jews.

What are the facts?

■ For years it had been one of the great policy objectives of the United States vis-a-vis the Soviet Union to allow the free emigration of its citizens. Of all the nationalities in the Soviet Union, the Jews are by far the most endangered and the most anxious to leave the country. Finally, the gates have begun to open – a little slowly at first, but then wider and wider. Under U.S. immigration laws, only a small number of these Soviet fugitives are able to come to our country. The vast majority plan on settling in Israel. And that is as it should be. Because the state of Israel has one single purpose: the ingathering of Jews, especially those that are persecuted and who are in need, from all corners of the world. And it doesn't make any difference, of course, whether they are "Europeans" or whether they come from the Arab countries, from Asia or, as now in the case of the Ethiopian Jews, whether they are black Africans.

■ So far, about 300,000 Soviet Jews have arrived in Israel. A total of about 1 million are expected within the next three years. Since the population of Israel is about 5 million, that is equivalent to the United States having to absorb about 45 million new immigrants – more than the population of the states of California and New York combined – and that within a 3-year period! And the United States is a rich country and an immensely large one. Israel is a poor country. Its per capita income is less than $10,000 per year and more than one-half of the country's budget is dedicated to defense. And it's small: the size of the country is one-half that of San Bernardino County in California. The Soviet immigrants come virtually penniless, because they may not take more than $100 out of the country. There are no ready jobs, and there is no ready housing. It is a daunting and almost overwhelming task to absorb these people. It is estimated that it will ultimately cost more than $50 billion.

■ But Israel is determined to overcome this challenge, to build the 260,000 new housing units that will be needed, to build the 12,000 new classrooms, to create the 360,000 new jobs, and to integrate the 1 million Soviet Jews into Israeli life, just as it has done with over 1 million previous immigrants. Israel and world Jewry will carry virtually all of the cost of this absorption and will create the massive additional infrastructure needed to sustain a population increase of over 20% in just two or three short years. In this fiscal year alone, more than $6 billion or 20% of Israel's budget will go toward absorption of immigrants. The American Jewish community will have raised more than $4 billion and has agreed to co-sign a further $900 million guarantee to help with these costs.

■ There is one urgent matter, however, in which the assistance of the United States will be needed. Israel will ask the United States to *guarantee* (not to grant, not even to lend) $10 billion for housing, funds that will be needed, in $2 billion yearly installments, over a 5-year period. This is a financial transaction that is virtually without risk and at virtually no cost to the United States. In contrast to many of the developing countries, Israel has never defaulted on a loan and has never asked for "forgiveness" of any indebtedness. It has a perfect payment record. American guarantees of this $10 billion loan are absolutely required in order to make the orderly absorption of Soviet Jews into Israel possible.

The matter of the loan guarantees will be before Congress almost immediately. The United States, a country of immigrants just like Israel, has tremendous moral responsibility in this matter. As with all other financial assistance to Israel, the funds under this guarantee will be used only within Israel's 1967 borders. No funds will be used to settle Jews in Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank"). But the United States must focus on the humanitarian nature of this enterprise. It must not be "linked" and must not be conditioned upon any political issues, such as the procedural questions of the peace process, the question of settlements in the administered areas, or any other "concessions". Israel, like the United States, is a beacon of liberty and of hope. The United States should approve the $10 billion loan guarantee to Israel – its best friend and staunchest ally in the world – and should assist, virtually without risk and expense to itself, in one of the greatest liberation movements of our times: the exodus of 1 million Soviet Jews and their orderly absorption in Israel.

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abeth Fox-Genovese uses to describe it—but it was also a powerful source of shared values.

How to retrieve those values? What Fox-Genovese sets out to do is to wrest contemporary feminism from the radical libertarianism that is its least attractive side, "the celebration of egotism and the denial or indefensible reduction of the just claims of the community." This is an exciting promise, but she either cannot or will not deliver on it. Refusing to accept that alienation and disjunction of home and workplace might be the prices women have to pay for becoming just like men, she seems to think that the substantive doctrines of individualism-based feminist orthodoxy can somehow be retailored in the latest cut of communitarianism without any loss of material on either side.

Take her treatment of abortion. Most feminists are pro-choice absolutists, and typically discuss abortion in the highly individualistic terms of "reproductive rights" and "control" over their bodies. Fox-Genovese rightly points out the contradiction between "feminist metaphors of motherhood and community [and] the feminist defense of abortion on grounds of absolute individual right," and contends that accepting abortion as just a component of women's sexual self-determination dissolves men's responsibilities to the next generation and "can logically lead to murder with impunity." These are powerful arguments, but she does nothing with them, simply acknowledging that she herself is a near-absolutist on abortion rights, and that nothing could change her mind.

In a discussion of comparable worth—the theory the government should equalize the wages for jobs traditionally held by women with those traditionally held by men—she agrees that such a system would end up discriminating against men who perform hard dirty manual labor to support their families. Nonetheless, she writes blandly, "we must have a collective conception of society that acknowledges the possibility that the good of the whole in some way transcends the good of individuals." Similarly with affirmative action, where she rejects the usual arguments for quotas and then figures out a communitarian way to defend them anyway, on the grounds that they serve the "collective social goal" of helping women and member of minority groups achieve equality.

Later chapters try to make a case for what she calls "a common culture" in which men and women (as well as whites and members of racial minorities) would each have a stake and each be recognized as equally worthy. She admirably repudiates both androgyny and female separatism, the two dead-end philosophical camps into which most feminists have divided themselves. But instead of going on to celebrate the difference between men and women—which might be a genuinely communitarian response, making room for the complementary roles of both sexes in a family or society—she continues the war against the masculine that the feminists she criticizes have been waging all along. "Feminists must begin by decomposing the very myth of man," she writes, in the same old language of the guillotine.

The personal is the political, as feminists are wont to say. This books ends with an autobiographical "afterword" in which Elizabeth Fox-Genovese relates the difficulties of living with another strong and professionally ambitious personality, her husband, the historian Eugene Genovese. Reading these pages on the tense, competitive, anxiety-ridden life of the liberated woman of the late 20th century—at its best, not its worst—does help finally to explain why Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, like so many who have bought into the feminist revolution, seems unable to provide a coherent or satisfying rationale for it.

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